



THE AUTHOR

CONGO DOCTOR



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ILLUSTRATED

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I KNEW by the change in the motion of the ship that we must have come into the mouth of the river. I could tell by the smell of the air that came in at the open porthole that we were close to land. I put on my clothes and went up on deck. It was early morning. In the distance, across the muddy waters of the Congo, I could see the indistinct outlines of the low coastal hills. I stood there for a long time, looking out at the gradually converging banks of the great stream and breathing deeply of the peculiarly scented air. It was my first sight of Africa, and the morning mist which hung over the water hid less from me than the romantic haze through which I looked upon the scene. This was Africa; my Africa.

"My Africa" because I think that I may rightly call mine that which has become a part of me, and Africa has claimed me for its own. The Congo has put its spell upon me. There is never a summer morning that does not call to mind the splendour of the dawn that breaks so suddenly over the equatorial forest, and lovely as the Kentucky moon may be, shining on the rolling bluegrass hills, I cannot see it without seeing, too, that other moon—the Mombojo moon, a huge and coppery disc thrusting up out of the jungle.

I remember how fascinating were the sights and sounds and smells and experiences of that great and vastly intriguing country when I first arrived. It was all new and strange and exotic and exciting. And now, far off, they fascinate me still, for the years of close association never dulled Africa's appeal for me and separation from it has

only served to draw me more closely to it in thought and sentiment. Possibly the writing of this book may ease the longing to return to the Congo.

My experience in Africa except for some travelling about was limited to a comparatively small area of the Coquilhatville Province of the Belgian Congo, and it is of that section that I write. When I say Africa or African or Central African or Congo or Congolese or use any other general term I am referring to that particular part of the country or its people.

I make no apologies except to say that there is a great chance of error when any white man attempts to evaluate native character and customs. We human beings have come long and different ways from our common parent stock, and after long ages under greatly divergent backgrounds we have—by the very nature of things—very different mental reactions.

When one realizes how very difficult it is to be sure that he understands his own children or brothers or sisters whom he knows so well—yet never really knows—he must be aware how hard it is to be psychologically *en rapport* with the people of a different race and greatly contrasting culture.

If one has ever found it difficult to understand how John Doe can hold the ideas he does, if he has ever sat in a London theatre and wondered what the Englishmen were laughing at, if he has at times found Frenchmen inexplicable or been distressed by the Mexican's perpetual *mañana* then he can begin to grasp the problem of apprehending the thought processes of the Congo native. We are all of the same genus and species and we are much more alike than some of our hyper Nordic brethren choose to believe, but I am sure that there are small but significant differences in the way we think.

I have been closely associated with a good many Congolese. I have been present at their birth—indeed I have

brought many of them into this world—and I have watched them die. I have seen them in joy and in sorrow, in anger and delight, in fear, hilarity, concentration, and calm; and I am convinced that it is impossible for a European to say with any certitude what a native has in his mind.

In practically all my contacts with the blacks of that region, and in all my efforts to penetrate into what they were really thinking, I have felt that I was being held off—not deliberately, but because of a subtle and inherent difference in our thought processes. And of course the language difficulty was always present—a hard barrier to surmount even for those who, unlike myself, thoroughly mastered the native dialects.

It is interesting that while we worry a great deal over this inability to understand the workings of the native mind, the native himself appears to have solved the problem as to us with the greatest ease. He merely explains away all the funny and inexplicable things we do and all our ridiculous attitudes by shrugging his shoulders and saying, "*Bendele bafa banto*. (White men aren't people)." It is all as simple as that!

It is a common fault among students and psychologists and sociologists who have been associated with primitive blacks to read into their actions a significance that is not there, and to put interpretations on their words that have no validity in their thinking.

"Look!" says a friend of mine. "Do you see that man rapping his head with his knuckles?"

"Yes."

"He is invoking the spirits by using a charm which he has hidden in his hair."

As a matter of fact the man in question was, in all probability, dislodging an insistent louse and at the moment was entirely innocent of any superstition.

There is no doubt that the Congolese are a superstitious people, witch-bound and spirit-haunted. They believe in

magic and curses, and they spend a lot of time invoking and propitiating their animistic gods. But it is a hard task for anyone who is not a native African to separate that which is from that which is not, and utterly impossible for him to understand the feelings and motives of those whose belief in such things is not acquired but inherent and hereditary.

And so my only apology is that I may have misrepresented my friends. I hope that my failure to apprehend their basic psychology is in some measure compensated for by my sympathy with their problems. They were my friends and if, in trying to be funny, I stress their peculiarities overmuch, there is no malice in it. My patience has been put to innumerable strains by the native character, but according to their lights, they almost never let me down. I know my hospital boys often levied tribute from the patients on the side; native watchmen that I set to guard certain things looked the other way while their friends carried away the stuff; sugar and kerosene disappeared from our storeroom under the most obvious circumstances; and my Congo workmen soldiered shamelessly on the job—but it was all within their code. They saw nothing wrong in it. The white man had everything and was fair game for anyone who could beat them and not get caught. But they are loyal to persons they care for and to principles they understand.

It is painful to remember the amount of effort I wasted in scoldings and exhortations, trying to stimulate a bunch of young lads into doing an honest day's toil, but when I needed paddlers for a long hard canoe trip these same young fellows gave their best without any urging. On one occasion I was called to attend a fellow missionary who had been taken ill at another station. It was a hurry call, and I put it up to the boys as such. I shall never be able to forget the way they bent to the paddles, and it was seventeen hours before they made their first stop!

I was coming home, another time, after caring for a sick

trader. I had left my wife alone at the station and I was anxious to get back. I had with me Mōnya, our houseboy, and some six or eight carriers whom the trader had furnished to lug my bed and baggage. We had followed the forest paths all day, and just as darkness was settling down over the jungle we came to a sizable village.

The chief came hurrying out to welcome me and offer me his house for the night.

"No," I told him, "I'm going on to Wema tonight."

"But you can't," he remonstrated. "The path between here and the next village is almost impassable, and the elephants are as thick as the leaves on the trees."

"I can't help it," I said. "I'm going on."

He continued to argue the point and the natives who were with me joined in on his side. They were tired and afraid to go on. I was afraid, too. The idea of a night meeting with a herd of elephants on a brush-grown foot-path in the middle of the African forest was not attractive. But I had made up my mind to reach home that night, and I was too stubborn to be dissuaded.

I turned to the chief. "Bring me a light for my lantern," I said, "and see that my carriers follow me tomorrow morning. They may stay here if they want to, but I am going on."

The carriers immediately went off to find houses to stay in, and the chief went after a brand with which to light my lantern. When he had lighted it, I thanked him for his hospitality and turned to go. As I did so, Mōnya came up and reached for the light.

"Aren't you staying?" I asked him.

"Would I," he replied, "allow my white man to go through the forest alone while I slept?"

The path was about as bad as it could be and still be called a path. It was grown over with brush and had no foot logs across the swamps. We met no elephants, but we were continually stumbling into their tracks, and the

for a very wide application of the trial-and-error method in selecting a vocation. Most of us end up by doing what we have to do or what we have drifted into, rather than what we have deliberately chosen. Very often our adaptability is all that saves us from the consequences of our lack of vision.

It was very largely by accident that I became a doctor, and I found myself practising in the Congo as a result of a series of entirely fortuitous events.

Back in 1917, before my brother and I sold our tyre shop in Walla Walla, Washington, and went into the service, I intended to become a chemist and specialize in rubber; but by the time the war was over and I had got out of the Marine Corps, I had lost interest in rubber chemistry. I went back to college mainly because there was nothing else that I wanted very much to do. It seemed a good idea to finish up, and then if anything appeared that I wanted to do I would be ready for it.

In the spring of 1919 a group of us at my fraternity house evolved the notion of taking a trip around the world, and we discussed it, off and on, with more or less seriousness, all the next year. By the time I graduated from Whitman, however, in the spring of 1920, only one other fellow and myself still had that dream. He was a year behind me in college, so I took a job as science teacher and athletic coach in the high school at Pasco, Washington, while he was finishing his senior year. The summer following his graduation found the two of us out in the harvest fields north of Walla Walla with our dream still intact. We planned to take our earnings in our pockets—I believe we had figured on money belts as being the proper thing—work our way by fruit steamer to Santiago, Chile; do the harvest in the Argentine; take a cattle boat to England; and so on around. The scheme fell through when my companion unexpectedly received the offer of a very good job. It was one of those jobs with a future, and it looked too good to be

me from Africa and from my fiancée. ' They were hard to endure, but they eventually came to an' end and we were married in the summer of 1927, after her return to America on furlough.

Thus it was that my interest in Africa came about rather indirectly and romantically. If I expected much of it, I have never been disappointed. The reality of the Congo has surpassed any dreams I ever had. My ten years in the jungle have been for me a tremendous experience that I would not exchange for any other.

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I have never wept, as Alexander did, for other worlds to conquer, but there have been times when I have wished that I might have been born some years earlier and been one of the early explorers of the Congo. When, from a canoe on the river, I have watched the bright dawn spread over the tropical forest and have listened to the awakening chatter of its countless hosts of birds and animals, I have envied Stanley. For the strangeness and wonder of a place that stirs one's emotions so intensely, even after years spent in constant contact with it, must have bitten deeply into the soul of the first white man to experience it.

History indicates that Alexander had but little cause for weeping, and sixty years have not changed the Congo enough to justify much regret at not having seen it in the day of its discovery. For the jungle is the same, and the same splendour still breaks over it at sunrise which once thrilled the spirits of the early explorers. The same somnolent solitude lies heavy upon it in the humid heat of the day. The same sense of utter quiet and profound peace pervades it at night.

The physical Congo changes slowly. In the Coquilhatville Province, the elephants still roam the jungle and the leopards steal through the night. Here the pythons drop

silently upon their unsuspecting prey Here the monkeys swing in long chattering lines among the treetops, and the parrots flock raucously home at evening to their nests in the marshes Here in their primitive mud huts, grouped in scattered villages of a few hundred people, live the Central Africans—the Bantus of ancient jungle lineage, the children of the forest They have changed, and will change more

They are a backward people, these Congolese, but they are not to be blamed for their backwardness, for they have no need of progress They live in a region where very little effort is required for subsistence Nature is not bountiful in this place, but she is adequate and calls for but a minimum of work from her creatures Stern necessity has never bidden these people to be up and doing Famines are mentioned in their folk tales, but generations may pass without it being necessary for them to bestir themselves unduly to keep from being hungry

This easygoing life has not made for progress and the present day finds them in cultural arrears Hidden away in the dense fastnesses of their tropical woods, they clear their tiny garden plots and grow their cassava, their plantains, and their corn, they hunt and fish and gather caterpillars and sit and eat their daily bit of food around the fires at the end of the day, they dance and sing, hold court, perform their rites and play their simple games, and time has no significance They are born, live, die, and are buried within the narrow limits of their forest world

That is the picture of yesterday and it is, essentially, the picture of today, in spite of some changes in their life brought by contact with the Western world But the picture of tomorrow will be a moving one in which the old will be replaced by the new with ever increasing rapidity If anyone desires to see the old Africa he must make haste, for in a few more years it will be gone There still remain a few who saw and can remember Stanley, but with the passing of their generation there is passing, too, the Congo

way of life that they knew. The forces of change are at work and gathering momentum.

. It has been just sixty years since Stanley made his first trip down the Congo River, and only in the last two or three decades has there been definite colonizing or much commercial activity in the forested sections of the country. It should be noted, also, that there has been no transitional stage through which the Central African native might pass from a primitive to a mechanistic culture. They are in a unique and anomalous position with regard to their contact with the civilization of Europe. The discovery of practically all the other considerable sections of the world took place before the arrival of the machine age, but the Congolese are being confronted with a mass of modern developments which are still amazing to us and must be positively overwhelming to them.

I know of no other people who have been called upon to make so great or so sudden a shift in ideas and culture. The untutored savage, who has never before seen so much as a wheelbarrow, is put to work on complicated machinery. He comes naked out of the jungle and goes to work in a garage. With no place to go for escape, the forest dwellers are caught and impaled upon the sudden prongs of Western iron and steel. Modern mechanisms and ideas are exploding like veritable bombshells in their midst. The simple aborigine, whose only moral background is a naïve animism, is being subjected to all the temptations and contrary currents of life which are characteristic of the worst of our civilization.

I have watched from a vantage point the dying of an ancient and persistent race, and I have seen their sons and daughters begin to turn away from the things that are old and focus their attention more and more upon the things that are new. I have seen the old traditions being discarded and the old cultural structure crumbling under the impact of new ideas.

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THE RIVERS

ANY fairly large and up-to-date map will show the Ruki River as it branches off from the Congo just above the relatively important—it has some six or seven hundred whites and is the capital of the Province—city of Coquilhatville. The Ruki divides shortly into the Busira and the Momboyo, and the former of these two again divides into the Salonga, the Lomela, and the Tshuappa. These are all large rivers and the ordinary small stern-wheeled river boats are able to travel up them for ten to fifteen days. They are flat, sluggish, and smooth-flowing, and wind with innumerable twistings and turnings through the dense, low-lying, tropical forests of the region: dark, coffee-coloured, silt-laden waters, the home of the crocodile and the hippo.

Numberless smaller streams join the main rivers, draining the large areas of swamp and marshland that are the bane of the traveller and make the construction of permanent roads impracticable. There is no spot in this whole territory that is not covered with rank vegetation. It is jungle; there is no other word that describes it. Its tall trees, hung massively with climbing vines, grow to the very edge of the deep rivers and invade the shallower streams. The underbrush is so thick as to be practically impenetrable. The waters flow as if between solid cliffs of foliage, with never a break except where the trees have been cut for a village site. The walls of living green shut in the clearings made by man, and at the slightest relaxation of his efforts they encroach upon his domain and take back their own.

Congo rivers are quiet, melancholy currents. Not always

so, of course, because they have their more cheerful aspects, but for the most part I have found their shadowy, smoothly flowing waters sombre and depressing. I cannot say just why that is. Perhaps because they have accumulated something of the dark and mysterious quality of the jungle from which they spring and through which they pass. Perhaps they share the heavy burden of fear of the spirit-ridden people of the region. Perhaps, as the natives believe, their swirling eddies are the dwelling places of the *bilima* (spirits) of the water which are to be propitiated with bits of food whenever anyone passes by in a canoe. Perhaps it was just my impatience with them because they were our only means of contact with the outside world and the arrival of news was so slow and so infrequent. Perhaps it is only that all rivers—all flowing waters—invoke a melancholy mood and Congo rivers are merely like the rest.

At any rate they make charming avenues for travel. I know of nothing more enjoyable than a river voyage on one of these tributaries of the Congo. Our mission has a double decked, stern-wheeled steamer of some seventy-five or eighty feet, the *Oregon*, and a journey of a couple of weeks on it when there was not too much of a crowd was most delightful. None of us ever packed to go abroad, but simply moved everything on loose with the aid of some dozens of little native schoolboys, very much as if we were going from one room of a house to another. Chattering and laughing and vying with each other for the lightest loads, the crowd of black boys made trip after trip carrying the things the white man needed for his journey: clothes, beds, bedding, mosquito nets, books, papers, typewriters, irons, buckets, washtubs, boxes of canned goods and groceries, great baskets of papayas, grapefruit and oranges, big bundles of bananas and plantains, miniature gardens of growing lettuce, crates of fowls. The traveller who has gone around the world in style, with everything furnished him but his clothes, knows nothing of the sport of visiting

different places when he has to take everything with him that he might want.

Only one who has lived off the beaten path, far away from friends and kindred and from the news and happenings of the outside world, can realize the excitement that we felt at the coming of the *Oregon*. When after weeks or months of comparative isolation in our little mission station in the jungle, shut off from all outside contacts, we heard far down the river the peculiar, musical, two-toned whistle of our boat, we received a thrill quite out of keeping with the actual magnitude of the occasion. It was in reality a tiny, somewhat down-at-heel, stern-wheeler on a minor Congo stream, but for us it was a great ship and no *Queen Mary* or *Normandie* ever loomed as large.

The natives made a great occasion of its coming, too. The Congo natives are incurably dramatic. Their enthusiasm is easily aroused and they work up a great deal of excitement over the arrival of any boat. So when it was "their very own boat" they went quite wild.

"*Nsang'ea ndoci, Nsang'ea ndoci, basu'akiso*,"* they yelled, and everybody went rushing pell-mell to the beach. Work stopped, school let out, and the hospital boys who might not go turned pleading eyes on me.

I cannot blame them. My spirits rise easily over trifles and they have been boosted high by many an insignificant event, but I have never gotten any bigger pleasure out of life than expecting the *Oregon*, hearing her whistle, and watching her round the last curve and slowly pull into the station beach. And when I cross the river Styx I want no Charon with a good-for-nothing rowboat and a measly pair of oars. I want the *Oregon* and Captain John, his dark face glowing in the amber light as quiet and as dignified as it was in life and his black wings folded about his slender, wiry form like the old black sweater that he always wore. I want *him* at the helm.

* "The Good News, the Good News, our boat."

Always as she neared the shore the natives started up a song. Their voices rang out over the water and joined those of the incoming passengers and crew. There was always a rush for the gangplank as everyone on the bank tried to get on the boat to greet the new arrivals, whether they were known to them or not. It was a wild, exuberant ritual of welcome.

And if there were excitement and confusion when the boat arrived, it was as nothing to what occurred on its departure. Everybody and everybody's brother wanted to go somewhere. With the appearance of the *Oregon* every native who had any connection whatever with the mission jumped at the chance of getting a free ride on it. A certain number of them were always allowed passage, but always there were ten times as many as the state quota permitted who wanted urgently to go. As a matter of fact, the state quota could scarcely have been adhered to without having a squad of soldiers on hand, and it was interpreted with a good bit of liberality, but aside from that the boat could not accommodate more than a small fraction of the would-be passengers. And by accommodations I mean simply enough space for the individual to park himself and his baskets and his pots and his tin trunk and his roll of mats and his chickens and ducks and goats. Though the average Congolese has little enough of this world's goods, if he goes anywhere he takes everything he has with him. Eventually the mission had to draw the line at the carrying of livestock and fowls—a line that I fear was not infrequently overstepped.

On the evening before the boat was to leave, all those who had obtained permission from the captain, or had a note from the missionary in charge of the station, were allowed to bring their plunder on board, and with them about an equal number sneaked on who had no business there. Only the vigilance of the captain prevented the boat from being boarded en masse. An incredible amount of

argument, cajolery and vociferation was required before the sheep were sufficiently separated from the goats to make sure that the steamer would not sink with the over load

"Who gave you permission to come on the boat with all those belongings?" shouts the sentry to a man who is attempting to get on with all he can carry and who has several friends helping him

"No one," shouts back the fellow, "but isn't this a mission boat and am I not a member of the mission?"

Little by little a modicum of order was established out of chaos and, in some way or other which I was never able to understand, Captain John got things straightened out without anyone being too unhappy

When the start was actually made there was more singing and a great crowd of natives stood on the beach waving and shouting good bye to their friends and relatives who were leaving. Gradually things quieted down aboard the steamer and one settled down to the utter enjoyment of life

The days on the *Oregon* were all alike. Early in the morning—long before daylight—I would become aware, without fully waking up, of the noises of the building of the fire under the boiler and the getting up of steam. Later I would be stirred to semi-consciousness by the singing of the boat crew, who begin each day with a short service of song and prayer. But when the singing was over and the boat pulled out, I usually allowed the easy motion, the rhythmic beating of the paddle wheel and the soft puffing sound of the blower through the stack to lull me once more into sleep

I rose when I chose and breakfasted at leisure and then, with a book or magazine in hand, adjusted myself comfortably in a deck chair. Slowly time passed. The steamer chuffed steadily on. Hour after hour the unending and unchanging panorama of the jungle unrolled before my

eyes. It was always the same—a solid, monotonous wall of green with no more variation in it than a plate of spinach. And yet I never tired of looking at it. It fascinated me—cast a spell upon my senses.

Now and then there was a village—a tiny clearing beside the bank and a huddle of huts. The naked village youngsters ran along, keeping abreast of the boat as far as the path by the river extended, waving their arms and shouting in greeting.

There wasn't much to do aside from reading and simply sitting and staring at the forest. I would sink deeper and deeper into my deck chair, then sleep. After a while lunch, then siesta, that blessed institution. I would return to the chair on the deck and sit relaxed in body and mind. Again reading and staring and snoozing.

Thus the day wore on. Long shadows formed on the water. The fleecy white clouds that hung fixed in the cobalt sky of the early afternoon grew darker and became more closely spaced. I would shake off lethargy to bathe and prepare for dinner. In spite of the sedentary day my appetite was excellent and the cook always had a good meal.

The darkness came quickly and the little stern-wheeler tied up at some village where there was steamer wood for sale. The villagers came thronging to the beach and mingled with the natives from the boat, while the crew loaded on the wood for the following day's run. Fires were soon built along the bank and big pots of food began to boil. A great amount of laughter and chattering came from the groups that squatted around the blazing fires, eating their evening meal.

A little later there was a religious service held by the Christian workmen and passengers from the boat. They sang a song or two and then John Inkima, the *Oregon's* captain, spoke. Tall and dignified—one of the best river-boat captains in the Province—he stood and began his talk. His forcefulness and eloquence gained him perfect atten-

tion. The rhythmic cadences of his alliterative Lonkundo were as musical as the wind through the leaves of the jungle trees. When he had finished they sang again, vigorously and with enthusiasm. The echoes of the final strains of the hymn floated softly back from across the river. The crowd dispersed, the fires died down, and the voices were still. An intense hush—the utter quietness of the tropic, jungle night—descended over everything.

And so to bed.

I know that perspective plays a large part in the impression one gets of a situation, that distance lends enchantment to a view, that the moon is brightest to the lovelorn, and that beauty is quite largely in the eye of the beholder. I know that the strange and exotic background of the equatorial jungle provokes an emotional reaction that is apt to result in the exaggeration of reality. But in spite of all that, I know I have never been as profoundly affected by the incomparable brightness and majesty of the stars as from the deck of the *Oregon* when it was tied up at the beach of some tiny African village. On many a night, aroused from sleep—and I am no mean sleeper—by some unexplainable inner urge, I have gone to the rail of the boat to look out on the river and the sky—at the brilliance of the innumerable stars and their rippling reflection in the dark water, at the preternatural splendour of the moon.

If there are any who are weary of the world, any who are blasé or who are over-sophisticated; if any are searching for the ultimate in travel; if there are any æsthetes or artists or poets seeking new sensations—if such there be, let them betake themselves to Africa and spend a month or so exploring Congo rivers on the S.S. *Oregon*.

But steamer trips were special occasions. Most of our comings and goings on the rivers were accomplished in native dugout canoes, and while, on extended trips, time was apt to hang a trifle heavy during the long hours in the

middle of the day, there are certainly many worse ways of getting to places. Eight or more good, husky paddlers—we used as many as twenty in one of our big canoes at Lotumbe—can make an African dug out move along quite rapidly with their short, fast, rhythmic strokes, and their wavering, chant like melodies help to relieve the tedium of the day. Whenever I was making a trip by canoe I always did some paddling, even though it was considered to be beneath a white man's dignity, for it made the time pass so much more quickly. It was difficult for me to get used to the native way of paddling, for while one of them alone in a canoe may use a long, slow stroke, a group of them will always employ short, rapid ones—usually from thirty to forty a minute. I finally got so that I could manage the paddling fairly well, but I was never able to join in the songs for a person would have to be a much cleverer analyst of music than I am to have even the faintest notion of what was going to come next.

When I was going anywhere that required more than a day's travel I used to like to make an early start, about four thirty in the morning, so that I could be out on the river before the first signs of daybreak. At that time the air was usually cool—almost chilly—and a thin mist hung close over the water. The paddlers would be stiff and just barely awake, so that there was but little talking and no song. An occasional grunt or yawn and the measured *sup, sup* of the paddles were the only sounds. Imperceptibly the darkness faded and the rim of the forest trees outlined itself like an irregular black wall, against the greying sky. The stars dimmed slowly out, and suddenly a hundred thousand hidden jungle creatures gave voice as if in answer to some unseen leader's baton. It was a hushed, pervasive magnitude of sound.

With the brightening of the skies, the paddlers would take on new life and presently someone would break into song. Most often it was Yoso—Yoso for whom I repaired

the most extensive hernia I have ever seen and who has handled the steering paddle for me on many a long canoe trip.

"Oh, the white man sits while the black men paddle," sang Yoso, and the rest of the paddlers took up the refrain: "Ohn—ohn—ohn."

Then Yoso again: "Oh, the white man sits while the black men paddle."

And again the refrain, weird and high pitched and in time with their paddle strokes: "Ohn—ohn—ohn" Over and over again—the leader half wailed, half sang his lead, and again and again the others came in on the aftertime.

Now and then the leader varied his theme.

"Oh, the white man has food but the paddlers are dying of hunger," was the burden of his next lament.

"Ohn—ohn—ohn—o-ohn."

Sometimes the nasal "ohn—ohn" would be changed to "hai—hai," or simply to a humming "mmm—mmm."

That may not be a very clear or enlightening description of the native canoe song, but it gives the general idea: one of them sings the lead and the rest of them join in, in an aftertime which sometimes repeats a part or all of the leader's words, but which more often is merely a humming or "oh"-ing or "ho"-ing or "ha"-ing or "hai"-ing

Another reason that I did not sing much with the paddlers, besides not being able to predict the melody, was that I could not maintain the stroke and have any breath left for singing. It didn't seem to make any difference whether these Congo chaps were just going through the motions or were really laying into it, they never seemed to lack the wind for their songs. In fact the harder they paddled the louder they sang. I do not know where they got the breath. For that matter I do not know where they got the endurance to continue pushing their pointed paddles through the water hour after hour, from morning till night, day after day.

the natives held a poor opinion of my capabilities in that regard, but it helped to pass the time and kept my muscles stretched a bit. I once did fifteen straight hours of it down the Lokolo from Bomate to Nkasa, just to prove that I could, and I was able to get up the next morning. Attempting to read in a pitching canoe with the glare of the sun and the water in my face was tough on my eyes, I suspect, but I had to keep up on my mystery tales and my *Saturday Evening Post*. As for sleep, I have dreamed as pleasant dreams with my neck popping back and forth as I ever could in a feather bed, and if my coffin is as comfortable as I have found the wooden bottoms of those dugouts I shall have no need for mourners.

I think I attained the ultimate in travel by canoe on a trip that Percy Snipes and I made from Bolenge to Lotumbe. We made a sunshade of a piece of native thatch, put a chessboard between us across the gunwales, and played uninterrupted chess for three full days!

Now that I think of it, I may not take the *Oregon* across the Styx. I will pick twelve good paddle hands, instead, and a long, narrow racing canoe. The channel may be difficult where I have to go and the contrary currents may be strong, but I am confident that if I put it up to them they will get me there, and no matter how involved the passage Yoso will nose me in safely.

CHAPTER III

THE JUNGLE

I LIKE the jungle. In years to come the memories of its dark and pensive unreality will compensate for many other things I may have missed. In the course of ten years I have travelled hundreds and hundreds of miles along its narrow, age-old footpaths that wind in and out among the trees, joining village to village. I have a notion that when the Roman roads were new, these paths were old. Shifting as the villages have moved from place to place and continuously changing their curves to miss a newly fallen tree but never losing their integrity, they have remained the same paths through the ages. With no other method of construction than the passing of bare feet and the occasional whacking at a root or branch with a native traveller's knife, they are wide enough only for the passage of a single man. When two people meet, one of them must back into the brush to let the other by. Leading away from the clearings, and swallowed at once by the dense tropical vegetation, they intrigue the imaginative, beckon the adventurous and charm the romantic—the mysterious, verdure-vaulted, leaf-carpeted highways of the African forest.

The jungle holds for me an endless fascination. It is so thick and heavy, so foreboding and still. It shuts a person in so completely and makes him feel so small. I have looked out over the apparently limitless expanse of many of the world's desert places; I have been tremendously impressed when flying at a high altitude above the sea by the astonishing bigness of the earth; but nothing in my experience has ever made me realize my own insignificance as thoroughly

as being alone in the midst of the Congo wilderness. There is within it a quality of awesomeness and loneliness and fear. I do not wonder that the natives people it with spectral forms.

When travelling overland I frequently used to ride or walk on alone and stop by some fallen log just to sit quietly in the remarkable hush of the forest and listen to the rare birdcall, the occasional whir of wings or snap of twig and the continuous hum of the myriads of insects—sounds that seemed to intensify rather than break the silence. Now and then a monkey would scold from a treetop or a troupe of them go swinging in a long line through the high branches.

The jungle has a smell peculiar to itself—a musty odour of decaying leaves and logs mingled with the pungent scent of moist green foliage. The tall trees grip the soil with spreading brace roots that look like rows of giant plough shares and every branch of them is hung with great festoons of climbing vines. So thick they stand and so dense is the greenery that only rarely can one catch a glimmer of the tropical sun. Now and then a single unimpeded shaft of light will find its way through the interlacing leaves like a bar of shimmering gold. This jungle has few brightly plumaged birds and what pale flowers there are lie hidden in the brush. The effect is sombre and subduing. The phrase *darkest Africa* is not meaningless.

I shall never forget the first extensive trip that I took from Wema to the jungle villages far from the river in what we generally referred to as the black country. For one thing it was the only considerable trip that my wife and I were able to make together while we were in the Congo, and then it was early in my Congo career and all one sees is more exciting in the early days. One's perceptions are keyed up, the novelty has not worn off and years of routine have not had an opportunity to develop the critical—not to say sceptical—attitude.

I had decided to visit all the villages within a radius of eighty or a hundred miles and give such medical treatments as did not require too much weighty equipment. Mrs. Davis went along to inspect the out station schools along the route, to keep me company, and to act as interpreter for me since I had not yet learned enough of the native language to get along very well by myself.

It takes a lot of carriers to transport all the equipment that a family uses for a journey of a month—all the beds and bedding, chairs, bathtubs, cooking utensils, groceries, water bottles, clothes and toilet necessities; plus all our school supplies and medicines and medical equipment. We made an extensive caravan, swinging in single file through the forest.

I hurried along in front, followed by my wife in a *tepot* carried by four blacks. I say I hurried, because the native carriers go along with a sort of shuffling half-walk-half-trot, and it extends an ordinary walker considerably to keep up with them. As they marched along they sang—the weird, half-wailing chant of the Congo burden-bearer. One of the themes of the song leader was my wife's weight.

"Oh-h-h-o-oh," he sang. "When we started out this morning mama (all white women are called mama in the Congo) wasn't any heavier than my little finger."

"Oh-h h o oh," echoed the long line of carriers.

"But now she's grown and grown until we can hardly carry her at all." And all the voices back along the path agreed.

We took time out, each day, for lunch in the depth of the forest. It was the simplest of meals, but eaten in that sylvan setting the gods from Olympus might well have left their ambrosia and nectar to join us. Each night we stayed in a native hut or in the slightly more pretentious "state house" in some village along our way. In nearly every town of any importance the government has had the natives build an outsize dwelling of mud and thatch for the use of any

official or other white visitor who might be travelling that way. It was in these we sometimes stayed, but more often it was in the tiny house of the local preacher or teacher, who would have felt offended if we had not accepted the hospitality of his vacated place of abode.

In that section most of the huts were made of heavy, split reeds, tied horizontally to form the walls, and entrance into them was only gained by stepping through a wide and low sort of window, a little more than knee-high from the ground. How gingerly, in the early days, one stepped across the dirty, oily sill in order not to come in contact with it more than could be helped. It took time to get used to the smell of those rooms, and even after years of travel through the bush the European nose was apt to turn up a trifle in spite of itself.

One never failed to bang one's head, whenever one went in, on pots or gourds or half dried hunks of meat suspended from the thatch, and to stumble over all manner of native paraphernalia left lying on the floor. The careful host picked up the most obvious impedimenta before he bade one take over, but his dogs and chickens oftentimes refused to make a change and stayed to keep the visitor company.

How well I remember the smell of our quarters on that trip. I have no adjectives with which to describe properly the highly characteristic odour—or odours—of the Central African domicile, but as long as I live I shall recognize my whereabouts by olfactory sense alone, if I ever meet with it again.

I remember the terrific rush of rain on the thatch close above our heads as we lay in the tiny native house on our second night out. It seemed impossible that the flimsy structure could withstand the furious impacts of the wind and water, but somehow it did, and though we slept soundly, occasionally we were awakened by the violence of the storm.

At one village the local preacher led us proudly to a

special guest house. We were delighted with its spaciousness and comparative cleanliness, but we had scarcely started to unpack for the evening before we discovered that the place was literally alive with sand fleas—the bane of Africa, the jigger. We hurriedly reassembled our belongings and moved to other quarters.

I have always been antagonistic to the incarceration of animals in zoos, birds in cages, and goldfish in bowls, and after having been exhibit No. 1 in so many African villages I feel more strongly about it than ever. That first trip was made through a territory where white men were still very much a novelty and white women even rarer, and we were under almost continual surveillance by hundreds of curious eyes. We never sat down to an evening meal at our little folding table without being encircled by blacks who commented with the utmost freedom on our every action. With disconcerting frankness they discussed our anatomy, our physiology, our food, and everything about us.

We spent the night of the full moon at Bekili, where the natives of a number of surrounding villages had gathered for a dance. It was the brightest and most perfect night I have ever seen. The soft air stirred the forest leaves at the edge of the clearing. Small wreaths of mist drifted here and there. If spectres ever walked they walked that night and whispered to themselves among the shadows.

The sun had scarcely set when the drums began—at first a tentative, occasional tapping here and there, as if to see if all the spirits were propitious, but little by little they became more persistent until their urgent and impelling rhythm filled the air and re-echoed from the forest walls. There was magic in the sound. There was insistence and abandon in the hollow, booming reverberations of the tight stretched skins.

I wondered at the tenseness that the drum tones caused in me. I tried to analyze the way I felt but unsettled was as near as I could come to it. I wished that I could know

how many generations had passed since ancient ancestors of mine had gathered in the woods to dance like that. And did that throbbing in my brain come from the village drums or as an echo from the long ago? I held tight to my wife's arm. The women of this world are better balanced than the men.

We walked along between the rows of huts from circle to circle of the dancers. The men and women danced in separate groups, but the drummers were always men. Their naked bodies, rubbed with oil, gleamed in the moonlight as they swayed in keeping with the drummer's mood.

"Ke-ke-ke, ke-ke ke, keke keke keke-keke, ke ke-ke," sang the women, over and over again.

They kept time with their hands and their feet, with their whole bodies, in fact. Every muscle in the circle seemed to be in motion. As if by some signal or some peculiar intuition, dancers from each of the opposite sides of the circle would advance to the centre of the ring, dance up and down together for a moment, and then retire to their places again. This manoeuvre was repeated continuously. There never seemed to be any hesitation as to who was next, and rarely was there a false move.

The women danced with easy grace, lightly and laughingly. They appeared to be having a good time. But the men made work of their dancing. They stooped low and struck the ground hard with their feet. They stamped and gesticulated and leaped high into the air. Sweat poured from their torsos, and their breath came in grunts as they kept up their continual chant. They seemed like men possessed—I have no doubt they were possessed by a self-induced frenzy—impervious to fatigue, the victims of some inexorable inner compulsion that drove them on despite utter exhaustion.

The even, staccato impulses of the drums increased in tempo as the night progressed. Hour after hour the

dancing continued. We went to bed to sleep fitfully, waking to hear again the unceasing sound of the toun touns. It was far into the morning before the last revellers made an end.

We stayed three days at Nkile on the Lomela River. The mission had a sort of outpost there, and in the palmy days of the early 'twenties when mission funds were plentiful, plans had been made to found a station there. It was a lovely place. The land fell away sharply to the water and when we cleared away the trees from the bank we had a view of the river far up and down stream. In my early days in the Congo, when almost continual contact with leprosy made me fear that I would get it, too, I used to say to myself that if I became infected I would build a house at Nkile and spend the rest of my life there. The leprosy would have been bad no doubt, but if I could have built the kind of place I dreamed about on that curve of the Lomela, such a place in such a setting would have gone far as compensation for the disease.

I should like to do that trip again—to make an early start once more and travel in the stimulating morning air along the narrow jungle paths—to stop occasionally for rest in the heavy hush of the fastness of the forest, to eat a sandwich lunch beside some dark and silent stream that slipped out of the density of trees and brush and lost itself immediately again—to have Nkolobise serve the evening meal and to eat it leisurely in the village street—to the amusement of the curious crowd—to sit at nightfall watching the stars and listening to the tale some old man of the village had to tell—to sink to sleep on a canvas cot behind the protection of a mosquito bar.

CHAPTER IV

CONGO JOURNEYS

I ALWAYS tried to make my yearly itineraries among the forest villages in the driest season of the year—usually from the middle of January to the middle of March—because the negotiation of a Congo swamp is men's work at best, and when the water is high, very difficult indeed. I think that anyone who wants to round out his education completely ought to make a trip on a bicycle through some of the swampy districts of the Coquilhatville Province of the Belgian Congo.

In the low water seasons the smaller streams stay fairly well within their proper limits and one does not have to wade or cross them on slim, slippery foot logs for more than a few hundred yards. But let the rains swell their currents a very little and they overflow into the surrounding forest for a mile or so, and it takes from thirty minutes to three hours of arduous toil to get across.

The native idea of how to make a good path across a swamp is to fell two or three small saplings lengthwise along the route, and two or three more at the end of the first set, and so on. They lash these together with vines and figure that the deed is done for a number of years. During the first few months after these logs—which are from three to nine inches in diameter, and more often the former than the latter—are put down, if the season is dry, they serve their purpose very well except for a marked tendency to turn ankles and break legs; but after they have begun to rot and have become waterlogged they are slick and treacherous beyond description. One goes slipping and skidding along them maintaining one's balance by great effort and all

manner of contortions. If one is lucky, one is able to stay up, right on them about half the time. When one is off them, one may be in six inch mud or three foot mud, and one may be upright and one may not. At many places the logs are missing entirely, and there is nothing for it but to go sloshing through the muck and mire. Thick brush and thorny vines conspire to obstruct the pilgrim's progress, and if he is carrying a bicycle on his shoulder his tribulation is extreme.

By contract with the Government Medical Service of the colony, I took an annual census of the major diseases of the people of three *chefferies*—divisions of the country based on tribal lines which might be very loosely compared to our counties. The three with which I had to deal contained some seventy villages and about twelve thousand people. In area they included roughly 4,500 square miles of territory and I had to cover all of the inhabited part of it, visit every village, and examine, more or less every member of the population. I say 'more or less' for two reasons. First because a lot of the people could not be bothered about coming to be examined, and second because the kind of examination I gave them when they did come might very well be put under the heading of less, rather than more.

I had police power from the state to enforce attendance at these examinations, but the old adage that more flies can be caught with sugar than with vinegar is very true in the Congo, so I did not press the issue. I examined those that came—I should say about 60 to 70 per cent in any one year—and didn't bother greatly about those that did not. I might, quite easily, have spent a lot of time doing careful examinations of those that presented themselves but since we had no means to treat them in their own villages, and since more people came to the dispensary at Lotumbe all the time than we could possibly treat effectively, I did not consider it worth while to try and develop more trade.

Moreover, I did not like to leave my family for long

periods of time. I was able to think of too many things that might happen to them in my absence. So I made as flying a trip as was possible and finished what the state officials and several other missionaries considered to be a month's journey in from eleven to fourteen days. I admit that it was quite a feat.

My schedule went something like this:

First day: About forty miles by bicycle and the examination of five villages

Second day: About forty-five miles by bicycle and the examination of four villages

Third day: About forty-five miles by bicycle and the examination of nine villages

Fourth day: About thirty-five miles on foot with fourteen swamps, both little and big, to cross; two hours crossing a lake by canoe, and the examination of one village. I hired men to carry our bicycles for us on this stretch.

Fifth day: About twenty-five miles by bicycle; ten miles on foot (carrying the bicycle) and the examination of four villages.

Sixth day: About twenty-five miles by bicycle, and examination of four villages.

Seventh day: Fifteen to sixteen hours steady paddling down the Lokolo River and the examination of three villages.

Eighth day: Five hours by canoe (down the Momboyo and up the Tuna Rivers); twenty miles by bicycle and the examination of five villages.

Ninth day: Thirty-five miles by bicycle, two hours by canoe up the Lowaya bayou and the examination of five villages.

Tenth day: Forty miles by bicycle and the examination of seven villages.

Eleventh day: One hundred miles by bicycle and the examination of eleven villages.

Twelfth day: Seven hours paddling down the Lowaya and up the Momboyo to Lotumbe.

The distances given are estimated, of course, but according to a number of missionaries and state officials they are fairly accurate. It may be that I have stretched them just a bit, but I am sure of this, at least, that no one who ever made these journeys in the same time as I did would feel that I am guilty of hyperbole.

On the third day of that trip we had a good road—a fifteen-mile stretch of truck road, built by the government for the Leverhulme Soap Company so that they might transport palm nuts from the interior villages. We rode this twice, doubling back on our route and then doing fifteen miles more into the forest. On the last day, too, before taking the canoe for home, we had very good paths. These were in the far end of the Boangi Chefferie, where the government had been maintaining an agricultural project and had seen to it that the villagers did the necessary road work. But for the most part we travelled over the typical, narrow, winding jungle paths, and I must say that they are far from being boulevards. The curves are sharp around big trees which bump you as you try to make the turn without dismounting; cross roots conspire to bounce your bicycle—and yourself—to pieces; branches and briars keep whipping your face and catching at your clothes and skin, and all the time the sweat keeps oozing out of every pore.

And then the swamps! I know, no matter what I say, I cannot give a proper picture of the Congo swamps. It is impossible to describe them; they have to be experienced. And to be properly appreciated they must be traversed while carrying a bicycle and wearing a sun helmet.

The Congo swamps! What potent memories the mention of them brings to me; of stretched-out slippery saplings, more slippery than ice could ever be, of ankles banged against the sides of them until I felt as if I would cry if it happened again; of barked shins and twisted knees; of tough, thorny vines that got caught continually in the

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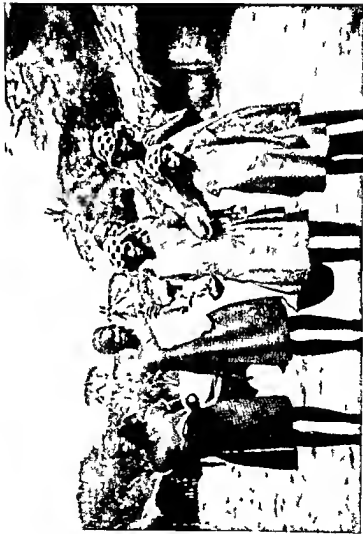
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Occasionally one finds a local chief who seems to be able to get what he wants done, but for the most part they command little respect from their subjects, if subjects they may be called. The chief has a peculiar status—more like that of a big brother in a family than any authoritarian ruler—and the head man usually has to yell and squabble and harangue and work himself up into a near apoplectic state before anyone begins to take him seriously. It is the native way. No one ever listens to anyone else until he becomes frenzied. The person who makes the most noise and the most fearsome faces appears to wield the most influence.

To see one of these forest dignitaries getting his tribesmen out for a medical inspection is something to behold. In the first place he is often very difficult to get out himself, but once he is prodded into action he beats the assembly call on the village *lokole*, the hollow wooden drum which sits in front of every chief's hut. He beats it moderately at first and then vigorously and then violently. After that he goes up and down the street doing vociferous personal work among the laggards.

I have often heard the remark that you cannot hustle the East. That may be true, but I am convinced that the whole East could probably be inveigled around the whole world before a single unwilling Congolese could be moved an inch!

As the people assembled I had them pass up, one by one, to be examined rapidly for obvious signs of yaws, syphilis, leprosy, tropical ulcers and sleeping sickness and to have their names checked in the outsize registration book that the government furnished us to keep records in. That finished I strapped the bunglesome book to the back of my bike, paid my respects to the chief, saluted the people, took a swig from my water canteen, and was off to the next town with my two associates cycling madly in my wake. In this way, and by dint of long hours on—and under—my bicycle, I was able to make a fairly accurate medical census of from



BOARDING SCHOOL GIRLS AT WEMA

the out-of-the-way route and winding forest paths that had to be taken to get there. I hated to leave my family, but of course I went.

I encountered plenty of difficulties on the way. The paths through that section were hardly passable for a bicycle, even if I had had one at that time, which I didn't, and I had to make the journey on foot. We started—"we" being a houseboy, a medical assistant, half a dozen carriers, and myself—in the afternoon and travelled pretty steadily until about two the next morning, when we stopped to rest. The night seemed so warm that instead of unpacking my blankets I just lay down on a native reed bed and went to sleep. When I woke up an hour or so later I was chilled through and my back was as stiff as a board and very painful. Anyone who has ever had lumbago knows how I felt trying to step along over the uneven forest paths, and especially in crossing the three or four miles of slippery, root-filled swamp we had to pass before we came to the main channel of the river. Every other step or two I would stub my toe or slip off a root and give myself a sickening twinge. It hurts even to recall it.

When we came to the edge of the stream proper, which was high at the time and extended several hundred yards into the forest, there was not a single canoe to be found. They had all been taken on a fishing expedition. I put two men to search the shallows for a sunken dugout that might have been missed, while the rest of us, with the aid of three soft steel *machetes*—the ordinary, ten-cent trade knife of the Congo—cut down a sizable tree, hacked it into two short lengths, and lashed them together with vines. We hewed out two crude paddles from some branches, and were just about to embark on our strange craft when one of the men found a tiny, half-rotten canoe. Felling a tree of about a foot in diameter with twenty-inch knives and cutting off two lengths of it is not a trifling task, even though we picked the softest wood we could find, and I

had blisters all over my cutting hand and several on my temper by the time we had the thing in readiness. Then to find a canoe and realize that all our work was wasted made us almost wish that we hadn't found it. At that, we considered very seriously taking the raft for the canoe was an improbable looking vessel. It was so narrow that I couldn't sit down in it and unstable to the nth degree. The front end was entirely rotted out and only by shifting our weight so far to the rear that the gunwales barely missed the water line were we able to keep the river from coming in the bow. Nkolobise our cook who came with me as personal boy Beuno, the hospital boy and I went across in her, and I hope that I never am as scared again as I was then. I know I broke all breath holding records before we reached the opposite bank.

Arrived at Ikete I found the woman suffering from a severe type of malignant malaria but it responded quite rapidly to intravenous injections of quinine and I started for home with the two native boys on the morning of the second day. We left Ikete at four in the morning and crossed the Lomela some seven or eight miles above the plantation just about sun up. We had a good canoe this time with paddlers to paddle us and saved thereby a vast amount of nervous energy. Once on our side of the river, we sloshed through the long swamp resulting from the high water and then settled down for the long march to Wema. We walked an hour and rested five minutes walked an hour and rested five minutes until around four or five in the afternoon when we increased our rests to five minutes every half hour. But during the last two or three hours I did not stop to rest at all. I was afraid that if I ever sat down I would never get up again. It was nearly ten o'clock when we got to the mission that night having done more than seventeen hours of almost continuous walking.

That swamp between Befili and the Lomela where we

made the raft, must have been a jinx to me, for I had trouble in it several times. On one occasion my retinue and I struggled through the mud and over the roots for two hours in the late afternoon and again found that there were no canoes. I had sent a special messenger ahead to tell the chief to save me one, but in spite of that there was none there. It was either fight back through the swamp in the fast-coming darkness or stay the night, and so we stayed the night. The natives tried to attract the attention of the riverside villagers across the river by beating on the huge, flat brace-roots of the trees with heavy sticks. They made a tremendous booming noise, but either the people on the other side did not hear or they did not want to come.

There was practically no dry land at all. I put my cot upon the biggest bit that we could find—a little island some fifteen feet in length—and there we made a fire and spent the night. I do not know how the natives felt, but after I had dried out by the fire and gone to bed inside my net, safe from the mosquitoes, I really enjoyed the experience.

The second extra-large day of the three was on my regular medical census trip in January, 1936. It was on our second day out of Lotumbe, and Bometela, the head hospital boy who usually went with me on these trips, Iloko, cook, washboy, bicycle repairman, and general Jack of all-trades, and I left the village where we spent the night at about five in the morning—that being about as soon as it was possible to see to ride a bicycle through the forest. We had ten carriers: two for my trunk of clothes, bedclothes, toilet articles and other personal effects; two for a food box; two for a bathtub of galvanized iron in which were carried cooking utensils, fruit, dirty clothes, gift eggs, and a general miscellany; one for my camp cot and folding chair; one for a large bottle of boiled water; and two for a crate in which to carry the numerous chickens I always received as gifts along the way. They took the regular short-cut path, while we went a long way round in order to get to

two villages quite a distance to the south west of our general line of march. It was a very hot day, but the paths were quite good and by one o'clock we had already done thirty miles, finished the necessary census taking, and were ready to leave the second of the two villages. There we had the choice of two routes. We could double back and cross the several swamps between us and our destination by the way the carriers had taken, or we could continue on in a sort of circle and come to the place from the other direction. Upon the advice of the chief we took the latter course. It proved to be an unwise choice, for the trail had been but little used for a long time and was so grown up with underbrush that it was impossible to ride or even push a bicycle along it, so for the next five hours we carried our machines through the tangled growth and over three big swamps.

The last of these swamps was an especially bad one and it took us more than an hour and a half to cross it—slipping, sliding and falling into the mire. The vines pulled at our clothes, tripped us up and persistently got tangled up in our bicycles. If there is anything more exasperating than trying to stand in a foot or two of sloppy mud and disentangle a Congo climbing vine from a bicycle without being thrown for a total loss, I don't know what it is. The heat was about the same as that of a Turkish bath.

I had eaten nothing all day and had not quite got used to that régime, and by three o'clock I had finished all the water in my canteen. I was about all in. When I came to the first dry spot on the far side of that last swamp I pitched my bicycle in one direction and pitched myself in the other. I was completely exhausted and I felt like the end of the world.

However, after about ten minutes' rest and some sugar-cane that Iloko produced, I began to feel a faint stir of returning life in my carcass, so I got up and went on. I think that Bometela and Iloko were sorry to see me move,

but they came along. In a few minutes we had come into the village of Lokokoloko. The two native boys were all for staying the night at this town, but I was too stubborn. I was scheduled to stay the night at Becimbola and I was going to get there or bust. I called the chief and asked him to get three men to go with us and carry our bicycles for us through the swamps.

"Surely," he replied. "Tomorrow morning."

"No," I said. "Right now."

"But the sun has gone down!"

"Well, what of it? Men don't die with the sunset."

"But it's dark," he remonstrated.

In the end, however, he agreed to find three carriers for us and seemed so sincere in the matter that I believed him and we started on for about a half a mile, in order to take a bath in the stream at the edge of the swamp. We had our bath and waited for several more minutes, but no carriers showed up. It looked as if we were stuck with our own burdens, and the idea had no appeal at all. But for sheer pigheadedness I would have gone back to the village for the night. As it was I looked at that bike for a long time and rubbed my shoulder tenderly before I finally picked it up.

Luck was with us though, for we had scarcely started on our way when we were overtaken by a party of five young men, from the town across the swamp who had been hunting and were going home. I was glad to offer them the enormous sum of five francs apiece to tote our vehicles for us. It was fortunate they agreed, for otherwise I probably would still be in that Congo marsh.

The night was clear, but in the forest it was as black as ink and we had to feel our way along the sunken poles. All too frequently we would miss our footing and go down knee deep or hip deep in the mud and slime. Now and then there would be a tiny break in the branches overhead and we could dimly see by the light of the stars where the path lay ahead of us.

About halfway across we stopped to rest by a great tree which had been uprooted and lay across the path. I climbed up into the branches and lay among them looking at the sky. The stars were wonderful. The night air was as soft as down. I was amazed to find that I was suddenly feeling very fit. My fatigue was gone and I was much less thirsty. I began to wonder how it would have felt to have been one of my apelike ancestors who spent all his nights in such a tree and how he must have felt and what he thought about—if think he did. I was enjoying myself a lot.

After a little while we went on and a bit before ten o'clock we came to Bolengambe the next town. My first thought was for water and food. I borrowed a cooking pot from the wife of the chief and Iloko boiled me some water which I drank while it was still hot. I could not wait for it to cool. I also tried to eat some poached eggs but we had no salt and in spite of the fact that I had eaten nothing since the night before I could not down a single egg! I lay down on a mat beside the fire to rest and to dry out and to wait until the moon would make it light enough for us to ride on through the forest. I was asleep in less than a minute.

The moon came up about eleven and by a quarter to twelve was high enough to throw an occasional glimmer of light on the path so we borrowed a lantern, got on our bicycles and started on the last leg of our journey. The path was rough enough to give us frequent spills in the uncertain light but good enough to allow us to ride all but some two miles of the way. As the moon rose higher we could see more clearly and we rode into the big clearing at Becimbola in brilliant moonlight at about two a.m. Iloko set up my cot while I changed into pyjamas and no one could have fallen asleep faster than I did.

I wonder if I shall ever find a bed which will afford me a greater sense of relaxation and restfulness than that cheap folding canvas cot on which I have stretched my frame.

after many a weary day of jungle travel. Within the protecting-shelter of a mosquito net and with a lantern suspended from the roof of the hut by a strip of *ngoji* vine for light, I used to lie and read and listen to the peculiar night sounds of the native town—and smell its characteristic smells.

I do not suppose the mighty cities of the present age, London, Paris and New York, would recognize their lowly relatives, the Congo jungle villages, but even in the shadow of the proudest of them it is still possible to write enthusiastically of the Congo lines of humble huts. It is difficult to say wherein the fascination of these villages lies, but it is there, and as I look in retrospect upon the cities I have known it may seem strange, but nevertheless it is true, that none of them provokes in me the sharp nostalgia that I feel for the Central African towns—which are not really towns at all.

I do not lack appreciation for the cities—not at all. I have stood in Times Square many a night and thrilled to all the thousand thousand lights of Broadway after dark; I have attended the opera in Paris on a gala night, and strolled among the gardens at Versailles; and I have known my London well and window-shopped in Oxford Street for trinkets to the value of a million pounds, and talked with Samuel Johnson at the Cheshire Cheese. I remember Milton, the little Oregon town where I was born and reared, and back of it the moody beauty of the Blue Mountains. I remember Mexico City; and Forest, Virginia, where the academy was. I claim Walla Walla, Washington, as my own home town. It was the city of my college days and my folks have lived there since 1917. I knew Boston and Cambridge when I was in the army, and saw the sun come up across the Charles from M.I.T. No, I do not fail to appreciate the cities. Not at all. I like Indianapolis, Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, Dallas, Miami, Asheville, Washington;

Brussels, Grenoble, Geneva, Heidelberg, and Mainz, the golden; Cairo, Naples, Florence, Venice—especially Venice. But memories of not a one of them can stir me like the thoughts of any little Congo jungle village when the sun goes down. I do not know why it is so, but there it is.

Some of these villages are scarcely more than a dozen huts strung along a mere widening of the path. Others have long lines of mud and thatch extending for half a mile or so, housing three or four hundred people. But big or small they are always the same double row of low houses on either side of a wide, bare path, with the indefatigable jungle pushing at them front behind. Here and there the women have cleared away a few square rods of ground at the back of their dwellings, in order to plant a few plantain or banana trees or a patch of sugar cane or corn. Occasionally in a big village there will be more than one street—the others most often at an angle to the main one. Less often one finds a sort of village square, and in such cases it is apt to be the chief and his wives who occupy the huts which face it. These dwellers of the Congo forest have never seen a horizon other than the encircling rim of the tall trees which surround their tiny village clearings, or the short vista of the river from bend to bend.

In spite of the dirt and squalor and general dilapidation, there is something about these jungle settlements which holds the interest and captures the imagination. During the day they are deserted and the heat of the equatorial sun reflects back from the hard-baked yellow clay of the path in shimmering waves. The men and larger boys have taken their hunting nets and bows and arrows and gone into the forest to hunt, or they are tending their fish traps in the river. The women have gone to their gardens to dig their daily supply of cassava roots; to take them to the swamp or river to soak and bring back the basketfuls they left to soak a day or so before; to gather the old dead limbs and bits of wood with which they make their nightly fires; and to fill

their gourds of water at the spring Throughout the long day their tiny babies ride their hips or are carried in skin slings hung from the mothers shoulders As the mother works or walks along the little one sleeps—its head flopping back and forth until it seems as if it must be snapped clear off

No one remains in the houses in the village except the very old, the crippled and the sick

But in the evening as the sun is sinking behind the tops of the trees, the village comes to life once more The hunters return noisily from their hunting and busy themselves, if they have been lucky, with the division of the meat The women are back from their labours afield, and are preparing for the one big meal of the day They have filled their big clay cooking pots with *manioc* (cassava root) and greens mixed with palm oil, and have them boiling on their fires It is an animated scene and there is much talk and laughter and gaiety

I was well known throughout the section of the country that I travelled and nearly always, as we neared a village, someone in the forest close at hand would set up a shout of "*Inonga, Inonga, Bonganga Inonga aoya* (Inonga [my native name] 'Inonga the doctor Inonga has come) A bunch of little boys would pop up out of the forest from nowhere and go dashing down the path ahead of us to spread the news of our arrival'

If the chief were present when we came into the place where we were to spend the night, he would hurry to welcome us and bring gifts of chickens and eggs—scrawny chickens and overripe eggs Later he would send word to the women of the town to bring food for my carriers—cassava wrapped in big leaves, bunches of plantains and bananas, hunks of vile smelling dried meat, ears of corn When they had it all assembled and the chief or his head man had formally presented it to me, I paid for it and had the hospital boy who was with me divide it among the men

For the things that he had given me the chief would take no pay, but later on in the evening I would send him a gift of money equal to the value of the things he had brought, and this he never refused. Gift for gift is the native way, and if I had failed to return his, he would have reminded me of it.

While I was tending to the buying of this food, taking census, or visiting the sick, Iloko, who was my personal boy on most of these trips, would get my supper ready and set up my bed. As darkness deepened over the jungle and settled down upon the tiny, primitive village, I sat and ate my nightly meal before the hut assigned to me and watched the groups of natives gathered round their flickering fires as they, too, ate their one big daily meal.

That is the romantic hour of the Congo. The heat of the day is gone and the night breeze rustles the branches of the trees. For the moment all trouble seems to be forgotten and everyone is relaxed and happy. Soon they will have to go to bed and fear, stark fear, will come and lie beside them on their flimsy mats.

I always felt it was a most amazing thing to be sitting there—a twentieth-century individual in a second-century world. The Congolese must have lived in huts like these in the second century. They must have eaten the same simple sort of food and hunted with the kind of bows and spears which are their weapons at the present time. They must have lighted the same sort of fires and laughed and chattered round them as they do today. I had to realize the insignificance of time for them. In that vast interior forest centuries made little change. Progress had barely brushed them as it passed.

When I had finished my meal, a group of villagers would almost always come to visit for awhile; to hear about the strange things of the white man's world; to tell their own inimitable stories of their wars and of the hunt; to recite the ancient folk tales their forefathers told. The Congo

native has an unerring dramatic sense, and the Lonkundo dialect is smooth flowing and musical. It was exceptionally good entertainment to lie back in my canvas chair and watch the stars and listen while they talked. And those odd whispering sounds behind us in the dark among the trees must have been the spirits of the past.

If there was a moon of any size or brilliancy at all, there was always dancing in the village, and the songs of the circles of dancers and the resonant tones of the drums would sound late into the night.

"Tum ta ta tum, ta ta tum, ta ta tum. Tum ta ta tum, ta ta tum." Those drums will call me back to Africa no matter where I go.

It was rare to pass a night in an African town without having to listen to one or more violent quarrels between some husband and wife. No words are adequate to describe the sustained, insistent, angry crescendo of a native Congo woman in an altercation. She starts out on a relatively high note and keeps going higher and higher, faster and faster, on and on. She never stops, never falters, never takes a breath, never lowers the pitch. For sheer, exasperating volubility she has no equal, and it is not to be wondered at that the husband usually ends by beating her up in thoroughgoing fashion. At that her screeches turn to screams that can be heard for miles.

I cannot say that I blamed the Congo husbands much in most cases, but it is difficult for a white man to stand by and do nothing when the beating up is going on. So there have been times when I have marched down a jungle village street in the dead of night, clad in pyjamas and slippers, and butted in on other people's family affairs.

Often now, far away from the Congo, I shut my eyes and in the phantom forest of my dreams I bring to life my native friends as in their village streets they carry on their common daily tasks. I smell the smoke, I hear the drums. I feel the coolness of the jungle night.

greatly for that length of time. But I was utterly fatigued. We had been riding hard for over nine straight hours and there was still an hour to go.

That last sixty minutes stretched into eternity. I felt as if each pedal stroke would have to be the last. I simply could not make those wheels go round again. I kept remembering how my legs used to feel in high school when I ran the mile. I began to play a game—I counted the pedal strokes and promised my legs that we would stop at the end of fifty, then I counted another fifty, I looked ahead and picked out a spot where I assured myself I would rest a while, and when I got there I picked another.

It was Sunday afternoon and there were a good many natives on the path. Every time I met a group of them I tried to bolster up my failing courage by asking them if I was near my destination.

"*Pěně pěně na Ntondō*?" I gasped in Bangala.

"*Pěně, pěně*," was their unfailing response, and they would have said the same, I suppose, if it had been a hundred miles.

At last I came into Ntondo village. Over the crest of a low hill were the mission houses strung out along the shore of Lake Tumba. With one final spasm of effort I topped the rise and coasted to the end of a probable hundred and fifty miles.

I was taken in, given a hot bath, an hour's sleep, and a good meal, which made me feel like an entirely new man. I examined the patient and was able to assure her that she had no organic heart disease. That night we crossed the lake in an unstable canoe in the face of a storm, and one of the missionaries drove me in a Chevrolet truck a hundred miles through a terrific rainstorm to Bolenge. I was able to get away for Lotumbe on a small river steamer early the following morning.

From that day to this I have never been able to look at a bicycle without revulsion.

4

Thirst is always a serious matter for a white man traveling through the jungle, for while there is never any scarcity of water, it is not the kind that would be safe to drink. At least that is what we were taught. As a matter of actual fact, I think that one could take a drink of jungle water now and then and never suffer any harm, but it had been dingdonged into me that only boiled water should be drunk and I persistently obeyed the warning in many a trying circumstance.

Whenever anyone went on a forest itinerary he always took with him a big, five gallon bottle of boiled water which was replenished every night or so and from which he filled his canteen whenever it got dry. If he stayed within close range of his carriers it was easy to have all the water wanted, but in most of my comings and goings I never saw my men from morning till night.

I always had a hard time making up my mind whether to carry a small army canteen and be thirsty a lot of the time, or burden myself with an old wicker-covered one I had that held about half a gallon. I usually decided on the latter, and even then I not infrequently ran dry.

All days within a hundred miles of the equator are apt to be quite warm and in the marshy lowlands of the Congo it is a close, steamy heat. A person sweats profusely with a minimum of effort. It does not take long to lose enough moisture through the skin to feel the need of taking some by mouth, and unless one keeps a check on his desires he is apt to find his canteen empty early in the day. If I were going to be out of touch with my big jug I limited myself to so many swallows an hour, but in spite of everything I continually ran short the latter part of the day. I drank a tremendous quantity of water at night, and took a big long pull just before filling my canteen to the brim in the morning.



GROUP OF PATIENTS AWAITING TREATMENT AT WEMA HOSPITAL

feeble protestations, and brought a tray with four full glasses on it and I drank them all. Probably she would have thought me rather unrestrained if she had not discovered that I had been in Gr  noble, France, her home; knowing that, she forgave me the seven glasses of water.

I look with very little pleasure on the times that I have drunk boiled water out of a native pot, but those were times when it was either that or plain unboiled or none. I suppose the fact that I was much too thirsty to wait for it to cool, or thought I was, had some effect on my disliking it.

They say the ermine grew thick white fur in adaptation to the snowy, frozen North, and that the horse evolved from *cohippus* because he had to travel over stony steppes, but what I fail to understand is why the Congo native with oodles of water all around has gone against it so. It is not that he objects to the taste or to its looks or anything about it. It simply seems that he has never developed the habit of thirst, and I believe that all my carriers put together drank less in a day on a trip than I did. They would stop by a stream every now and then and make a dipper from a leaf, and some of them would drink and some would not, regardless of the heat of the day and the distance they had come.

In spite of being sorely tempted, times on end, I never took a drink of swamp water in all my travel through the jungle, but if the skin could take it up I would have had no lack of it. For going through the Congo forest means that one rarely has time to dry out completely between one swamp and the next, and besides I liked to take a lot of baths.

In ordinary mission station life the taking of a bath was accomplished in a galvanized washtub of uncertain dimensions and with only a very small amount of water—two buckets was about the maximum. I had been forewarned when I first went out to Africa and had a long tub made

for me so that I could get myself all in at once. But in an evil hour I attempted to kill with a hatchet a rat that had fallen into it, and was never able to solder effectively the holes I made. I killed the rat, but thereafter I had to take my baths in sections.

When I was on a trip I always carried a bar of soap, and whenever I came to a likely stream I stopped and took a dip in the red brown water filled with silt. Sometimes the streams were not so likely looking, and I had difficulty in getting enough water to cover me, but there were others where one had a chance to take a good swim. I have taken a lot of baths for a man of even my much-washed generation but none that I have ever had or ever hope to have could be more satisfying than the ones I took along the way in the heart of the African jungle.

My liking for big, fresh water baths almost proved my undoing once when E. B. Smith and I were on a trip up the Momboyo. We had just come into Bonginji and had been invited to dine with Monsieur and Madame M—— at their newly established plantation a few miles back from the village. In order to present as good an appearance as possible, we took our way to the river to have a wash. We wanted to miss the crowd of curious natives that would be at the beach, so we turned off through the forest to come out on the bank higher up. We followed a narrow path for a while and then headed directly for the river through the brush. We were easing our way through the thick tangle when we became aware that we were in the midst of the advance spread of an army of driver ants. Before we could adequately realize what was happening they were all over us like a million little devils, each with his pitchfork.

I started to run, first one way and then the other, but everywhere I turned there seemed to be more of them than ever, and each second added scores to the number that were already on me and biting me. If it had been open country escape would have been easy, but speed is simply

impossible in such heavy underbrush, and there was no way of telling whence the ants were coming. I caught a glimpse of Smith and started after him, only to get caught in a mess of thorny vines. I began to wonder if I might not be done in before I could get away, for the vicious insects were hurting me so badly that I was almost in a panic. I took a bad licking from the briers, but finally jerked away and went plunging on—jumping and twisting and grabbing at the ants. After what seemed to be a long time, but which could not have been more than a minute or two, I came to a narrow creek. I found Smith already in it and we stood in the water and took off our clothes and got rid of our attackers. We looked like speckled men, for once a driver gets his pincers set his head comes off before he releases his grip.

CHAPTER V

PLANTERS TRADERS AND AGENTS

MONSIEUR and Madame M—— were quite a pair. Strange characters find their way to a new land—and interesting ones. The M——s were young—they had a little boy of five or six—and they were out to make their fortune in the colony. I do not know what he did before they decided on the African venture, but he came first as a planter and overseer for one of the big commercial companies—I think it was the Société Anonyme Belge—and got the hang of things and did very well for himself. He did very well for the company, too, for they offered him an excellent job to stay with them. But he had bigger things in mind, and when his term with them was up he brought his wife and baby out with him and bought Lonoli. Lonoli was next to Wema and that was how we came to know the M——s. We had already gone from there when he took over, but we heard a lot about him from the Johnstons who came back from furlough when we left and with whom the M——s were very friendly.

Lonoli was a large rubber and coffee concession that had made big money for the original company when the price of rubber was up in the middle twenties, but they had been unfortunate in their choice of overseers and with the fall in the rubber market things went from bad to worse. They had practically ceased to work it when Monsieur M—— came along and bought it.

I do not know anything about business but that man must have because in the course of a few months he had the old plantation humming like a top. With only his wife

-and one other white man to help him, he ran a gang of seven or eight hundred natives and got a lot of work out of them. The natives admired him. He was a big man and he seemed endowed with an inexhaustible amount of energy. He went snorting around on his motor cycle, first one place and then another, exhorting the workmen to greater efforts in a tremendous voice. He expected his men to work and he chivvied them about a bit, but he did it without rancour, and he was kind to them if they were ill, and his wife made clothes for them and admired their babies and gave them pills, so that between the two of them they got more out of a gang of native labourers than anyone else I have ever known. Where most of the big companies were allowing their rubber trees to stand idle or were cutting them down and planting palms, Monsieur M—— was turning out all the latex he could get his trees to drip and making a profit on it.

Having got Lonoli going well, he came down on the Momboyo and purchased an old government plantation at Bonginji. He made a short visit or two to the new place to get things started, and then when he got a friend of his out from Belgium to take charge at Lonoli, he and his wife came over and installed themselves at Bonginji. They had only been there a week or two when Smith and I came along, but they had already got well established. They had the knack. They had the energy and the enthusiasm. It was stimulating to be with them.

Besides rubber and coffee, on this plantation he was producing considerable cinnamon bark and a great quantity of a native fibre, something like jute, which came from swamp vines. Monsieur was full of his projects. He was Flemish and spoke French with a strong accent. We sat in the main room of their new mud house and he talked a blue streak. He had the plantation at Lonoli and it was doing well and he had this one and it, too, would do well. And he had

offers out to buy three other old rubber concessions. I bantered him a bit:

"If you keep on you will become *le roi de caouchouc*."

"It is a good phrase," he replied with earnestness, "and it may be that I will be just that—*le roi de caouchouc du Congo*."

The supper Madame served deterred his conversation for a little while, but only for a little. With his napkin in one huge hand and a piece of chicken in the other he gesticulated to drive home his points and talked about the contracts he was going to have with some company making rubber soles for shoes; about the steamboat he was going to buy, about the certain fortune he would make if there should be a war. His wife tried hard to switch him away to other topics, but he was not to be restrained, and her remonstrances in Flemish only served to make him talk still louder than before. We stayed with them well into the night, and he was still going strong when we got up to leave.

Bonginji was the place where we heard the news of Roosevelt's election. The native village there was more than a mile from the river, the M——s' plantation was inland several miles, and on the beach itself there was a company post—the Equatoriale. It was an old-established post and had been run for many years by a Dutchman who had just completed the process of drinking himself to death.

I felt sorry for the agent who took his place, whom I shall call M. Henri. He had only lately come from Belgium and had been working as a clerk in the main office of the company at Coquilhatville. When word came that old man O—— was just about to sink forever into alcoholic bliss, young Henri was offered the place.

I do not know how this chap ever came to the Congo as a company clerk. He was not at all the type. He was tall and dark and sensitive of feature and had the saddest eyes—although in talking to him he did not seem so sad. He was a musician of considerable parts and once, some months

later, when he was on a trip down river, he spent the evening at our house and played a long time on our little tropical piano—Chopin, mostly.

He got up to Bonginji in time to see the last days of the Dutchman and to lay him in his grave after a final, terrific bout of delirium tremens. It could not have made him very happy to have had to see to that alone.

When we came along he had been up there several months, mostly in the bush, and we found him busy fixing up his house. He had the walls all newly whitewashed with native white clay, and he was in the act of varnishing a table with varnish he had made himself. He was manifestly delighted to see us and urged us to have dinner with him every evening as long as we were there.

We went to the M——s that first night, but the next one found us on the open porch of Henri's thatched mud house eating such a dinner as one would expect to find only in some famous French restaurant. It was a peculiar situation. There we were dressed in our old, worn khaki clothes, sitting at a rickety table in a barnlike, Congo company-house, but having served to us as fine a seven-course dinner as I ever hope to eat. The jungle pressed in close upon the little clearing and we could see just a circular patch of stars.

I cannot remember all we had to eat but there was wild pig, antelope, and guinea fowl, a native fish called *capitaine*, and squabs. I do not know how he wangled all the vegetables he served, and he had fixed up salads and half a dozen different kinds of sauce. To finish up, he had some really remarkable *crêpes suzettes*.

It was a silent meal. Each one of us seemed wrapped in his own particular thoughts but there was no restraint. The strangeness of the scene impressed itself upon us and no one cared to talk. Afterward Henri turned on his new radio and tuned in on London, Moscow, Paris, and Berlin. The reception was perfect and we sat listening until late

into the night. Never have I appreciated to such an extent the magic of wireless as I did while listening to the voices of today sounding in the atmosphere of the past.

We went back each evening after that as long as we were there—not to eat, for we refused to let him burden himself with such extensive preparations—but to listen to the radio. One night he told us something of the story of his life—of his father's tragic romance: a French colonial officer who had lost his beautiful young wife when Henri was born; of his own unhappy marriage to a girl whose extravagance had caused him to lose a sizable inheritance, of his coming to the Congo.

Poor Henri! He kept insisting that he never touched a drop of anything but water—we never intimated that he drank—and talked about how much he liked the life *en brousse*. But his very protestations gave him away, and it is ten to one that his will be another lonely grave marked for a day or two in the heart of the African forest. So many, many of them go that way. The loneliness and isolation wear them down. Only a pile of bottles tell their story after they are gone.

I have buried many of them myself, and seen a lot of others on the way. They came to get rich quick and stayed to rot. Some notable exceptions appear only to prove the rule. They lived in out-of-the-way places where they might go for weeks or months without seeing another white man. Each of them had his native wife and not infrequently a number of yellow children. They exercised but little—mostly swallowing—and as a usual thing they had almost nothing to read. Blackwater fever got many of them, thus robbing alcohol of victims.

I shall not forget the first man I saw succumb to that illness. It was soon after my arrival in the Congo, and I was at Nkile on a trip from Wema. I was on the eve of starting home when a group of workmen from the S A B. post came to ask me to see the agent, who was ill. The

post was at Besoi, some six hours farther up the river, and it was well into the night when I reached the little compound with its dilapidated mud house.

I found Bobolangonda—to use his native name—badly off. The houses in which almost all the traders live are built in native fashion out of poles and mud, roofed with native thatch. They have some three or four big rooms surrounded by a porch, and only rarely do they have a floor of anything but pounded earth. The one where Bobolangonda lived was very down at the heel—three of the rooms were full of ivory tusks and wicker sacks of varnish gum and palm kernels. In the fourth room, watched over by his native wife and a group of other blacks, lay the sick man.

The place was dirty and cluttered up beyond description. A smoky lantern on a table at one side of the room gave the only light. A big wooden bedstead, covered with a thick, lumpy straw tick, stood in one corner, but the trader was stretched out upon his folding camp bed.

Bobolangonda—the name means, literally, Breaker of the Forest—had had a considerable reputation throughout that section. He was a man of very large stature and a tremendous worker. His turnover of trade goods and produce was greater than that of any other in that part of the Congo. He alternated periods of unceasing effort—driving himself and his men to exhaustion—with bouts of drinking that might last days or weeks.

He was unconscious when I arrived, and had been so for some time, but I gathered from his *capita* that he had been taken ill with blackwater fever some five or six days previously, and had had a complete suppression of urine for nearly two days. It looked like a hopeless case, but Beuno, the hospital boy who was with me, and I went to work on him with baths and packs and intravenous fluids. I gave that man over 6,000 c.c. of fluids intravenously—salt solution and sodium bicarb.—using only a 10 c.c. syringe! I had to make up the solutions myself and they

were probably none too sterile but it was the only chance I was sure that there was no hope for him but felt the necessity of trying to work a miracle

He looked better the next day and for a while it seemed as if he might regain consciousness but he never did It took him a long time to die He lay there gaunt and dark staring out of unseeing eyes muttering incoherently in French and Bangala His end came on the morning of the fourth day after my arrival

On the day before his death two other white traders from company posts farther up the river had come to Besoi and with their help and that of the native workmen I made a box and buried him He was a Frenchman and a Catholic so I called the native *catechiste* from a near by village to read a service over him in Lonkundo and I placed a small tricolour on the cross at the head of his grave

2

The only decent strawberries I ever saw grown in the Congo were in the garden of Bondélé molé (Little White Man) who ran his own small post some twenty miles above Lotumbe He kept his place meticulously clean and took great pride in his vegetables and European pigs and fowls He was very well educated but he mixed his horticulture and got unpromising results

A few hours journey below Ikete on the Lomela River was the old established company post of Ngombe with its hundred hectares of rubber trees I stopped there once toward the end of a medical trip to the villages on the far side of the river When we got in I found a messenger waiting for me in the native village with a note from the agent asking me if I would come to see him

The old decayed brick company house was on a high eminence—a sort of butte—and commanded a wonderful view of the river It had once been an important post but

that had been long ago, and when I saw it it was in the last stages of disrepair. Edgar Allan Poe could have written a weird tale about it. It was that kind of a place. And Monsieur L—— was a Poe character. I had heard a good bit about him from the overseer at Ikete. He was French, a member of a quite important family, and he had been an ace in the French flying service during the Great War. He had been badly wounded, captured, and held in a German prison camp for a long time. He had come to the Congo soon after the war.

He rose from his seat on the rotten veranda when I came up and motioned me to a seat in a wicker chair across a table from himself. He was very carefully dressed and had on a very fine white silk shirt. I shall always remember that.

He called the boy.

"What will you have to drink?" he asked of me. "I can give you anything you like."

"I'll just have water, thank you," I replied.

"But surely . . . Boy," he said, "bring the doctor a glass of water and some whisky for me."

"You see," he continued, "I never drink anything, either."

"I wanted to talk to you about my health," he said. "I have been very robust, but of late I've not been sleeping very well. I see so many strange visions when I go to bed. And I am very nervous." He took a long drink. "Perhaps you could give me some advice."

I was about to tell him that I thought I had exactly the advice he needed, when his cook boy came to announce that supper was ready and we went around to the side veranda where the table was set. We talked for a while about flying, about the price of rubber, about the beauty of the site where we sat. But Monsieur was ill at ease. He did not say so, but I imagined that he was seeing things in the uncertain evening light.

Later I did give him some advice, but I knew it was useless. He was too near the snapping point. He sat nervously smoking cigarette after cigarette.

"I've practically stopped smoking," he remarked, "except for an occasional cigarette."

Nkolobiste, my boy, had brought a lantern with which to light me back to the village, and he sat and waited for me until I was ready to leave. As we walked back through the rubber trees he remarked sagely: "*Onko aotulam'-osongwa jingae* (That one is about to go crazy)" And I let the diagnosis stand.

\ 3

I once made a trip down the Lokolo with Monsieur P——. He was the agent for the S A B at Ifulu, a short distance up from Lotumbe, and he had been far up the Lokolo River buying varnish gum and palm kernels. I was making my regular medical census trip, and luckily for me we both came into Bomate at about the same time one evening. We had supper together on a mess of little, marble sized Irish potatoes which he had got from the natives. Potatoes, as a general rule, do very poorly in the Congo and seem to grow mostly to tops, but under the instruction of some of the Catholic brothers occasional, energetic natives have been able to get a fairish yield of dime-to-half dollar-sized spuds. Monsieur P—— had several bushels of them with him. They were little, but a potato is a potato, especially when you have not tasted one in many months, and along with some wild-pig gravy they went extremely well.

I have no trouble recalling that meal. We sat out on the narrow dirt porch of his storehouse, surrounded by piles of wicker bags of copal, and ate off one of the wobbliest tables I have ever seen, but the potatoes and gravy were peerless. The house was close to the dirty, littered, back-

water beach, but from above the rim of the trees the last glow of evening softened the scene with its fading light.

We got away early the next morning. My paddlers were in high spirits, for they were looking forward to a day of leisure instead of labour, and the loading of the steelboats and dugouts was accomplished with much shouting and laughing. I was as pleased as they, for with the motor boat we would be at Nkasa by two or three o'clock in the afternoon without any effort, instead of having to paddle hard all day and get there by eight or nine at night.

The Lokolo must undoubtedly be the crookedest river in existence, for time and again it meets itself coming back with only a little fringe of trees between the two currents. But it has beauty. Its smooth, dark waters flow narrowly between high jungle walls that appear almost to meet overhead. Our old Ford motor chugged wheezily along in spite of the heavily loaded steelboats on either side of the launch.

I sat in the bow of the boat for a long time with the cool air blowing in my face, and watched the changing moods of the morning. The shift from night to day in the African forest is always a dramatic moment.

About seven o'clock we came to the little river village of Ilingo and I had the opportunity of observing the characteristic technique used by the traders in checking up on their native clerks. My observations have led me to believe that there is considerable room for improvement in the merchandising system that has developed in the Congo. Each individual trader or company agent works a considerable area, and in each of a score or two of villages he establishes a post—builds a mud house, stocks it with trade goods, and hires the most likely native he can find to be the clerk. Once in every three to six months he returns to "control" the activities of his clerk—to find out what he has bought and sold and to balance the cash with the books. It sounds simple enough, but it is almost impossible to

CHAPTER VI

BELGIAN ADMINISTRATORS

THE Belgians take a lot of pride in their colony. It is not so evident now, but a few years back, whenever one went into a shop in Brussels or Antwerp to buy equipment for the Congo, one was treated with especial consideration. And if it became known that one had already spent some time out there, then one immediately was treated as one of the family. Every Belgian had some friend or relative who was or had been in the Colony.

"Perhaps Monsieur knew Georges Gevaert, our cousin? No? Well, of course the Colony is very large but one can never tell when one will meet someone who has known him there. Would Monsieur wait just a moment till I go and call my mother? She is so interested in people who have been in Africa."

The sailings of the steamships of the Belgian Line, which maintains a bi-weekly schedule to the Congo, were great events. Enormous crowds came to see the voyagers off and were so thick on the boat itself that it was almost impossible to move about. There were dozens of professional photographers snapping this group and that, and every third person had a camera of his own which he was using frequently. There is always a thrill for me in the sailing of an ocean steamer, and these big, Belgian family affairs had more to them than any I have ever seen. The docking of the returning ships was also a gala business. These were their boats with their relatives and friends aboard, going and coming from their Colony, and the Belgians made the most of it.

I think that they are justly proud of their African land

and what they have accomplished there; for while I am no expert in colonial affairs, I am convinced that they have done and are doing an excellent job of developing the Congo and its people. It is not an easy task. It is like a little mother with a great big son, for Belgium itself is only about as big as Maryland, while Congo-Belge is approximately as large as all of the United States east of the Mississippi. The sparseness and primitive character of the population, and the climate and the nature of the country, add to the difficulty of commercial exploitation and effective colonization.

But the Belgian government has gone about its work calmly and methodically, and slowly but surely, it seems to me, it is building a sound economic and social structure in the face of considerable odds. I believe I am right when I say that the Colonial government has encouraged every form of constructive organization and has attempted to limit the activities of questionable elements. It has subsidized missions and medical agencies, and is establishing as rapidly as possible its own comprehensive medical service and school system. The latter is barely in its infancy but its growth should be quick. The government is, in my opinion, to be especially commended for its scientific attitude toward the old native culture: instead of trying to abolish primitive customs it is, whenever possible, developing the new order on the foundations of the old.

Day after day, in thousands of tiny Congo villages in the depths of the tropical forest, the elders come to sit beneath some tall palaver tree and hear the grievances of members of the tribe. Seated in a partial circle in their peculiar native chairs, they listen to the dramatic accusations of the one who has—or thinks he has—been wronged, and to the equally dramatic defence of the accused. The witnesses are called. Sometimes plaintiff and defendant both talk at once, and the witnesses and judges join in, while the jungle clearing echoes their vociferation.

These are the native courts—the kind the Congolese have maintained for centuries—and on them as a basis the government has built the new judicial system wherein the case first goes to the village assembly of elders and then if appealed to the court of the *Chefferie* where five men chosen from the elders of the tribe sit for several days each month. A further appeal brings the case to the local administrator, and after that to the advocate of the king who goes from place to place as there is need for him.

This basing of the judicial system on the customs of the past and deferring to the native courts wherever possible, is sound in theory and its results have been excellent in practice. No people in the world are more jealous of their prestige than the Congolese, and the attitude of the government in delegating to them as much authority as possible is doing much to bring about amicable relations between white and black.

The officials have been quick to see the beneficial results of this policy and have used much forbearance in their dealings with natives overblown with new power.

Take the case of John Ibola for instance. Ibola was for many years the pastor of the Lotumbe church and he was a good one. He had a lot of organizing ability and was an excellent preacher, and appeared to have more than a little spiritual insight into the things of the Kingdom of God. It looked as if he were set to continue in that position for a long time but he was of the line of rulers of Bombomba and it came about, through a series of deaths and the disaffection of an older brother, that he was chosen by the council of elders to succeed his grandfather as the chief of Bombomba.

It was a hard moment for Ibola. As a young man he had given up the old life and had become a sincere convert to the new religion and he had worked for it effectively throughout the years. Then came this very tempting offer of the chieftainship. It was an important post especially

because whoever became the chief would also be recognized by the government as the head of the Chefferie and be given extensive authority. No one, unacquainted with Congo native psychology can realize how much power and position mean to them, and though Ibola wrestled long with his spirit over the matter, in the end it was too much for him.

It very soon became apparent, however, that once having overcome whatever scruples had held him back, he was now proceeding with all brakes off. He wasted little time in acquiring a harem; he began to grow wealthy by devious methods; and he developed into a prime snob in an inherently snobbish society.

The local government agents were quickly made aware that they had a problem on their hands. Ibola had lost his awe of white men, and he deliberately set out to increase his prestige at the expense of the white officials. He had a big moment when he refused to allow the concession of some land to a trader and made his refusal stick.

Ordinarily, when an individual trader, company, or mission wanted some land for its own use, they simply filled out the necessary application for it, had it surveyed, and then met with the important men of the section where the concession was to be. These, in the presence of the government administrator, then signed with thumbprints the release for the use of the land. It was merely a matter of form, for the native elders always agreed to all the questions asked and considered it quite amusing to make the imprint of their thumbs on the various papers.

Soon after Ibola had become chief of Bombomba, however, a local trader had made application for a few hectares of additional land adjoining those he already had, and when they had all come together for the formality of affixing their thumbprints, Ibola refused pointblank to allow it.

"No," he said, "on this land there are a number of valuable palm trees from which the natives have always got

nuts for food. It is not fitting that this land be given over to the use of the trader."

It was an unheard of situation. Everyone knew that a few dozen palm trees meant nothing at all to Ibola. The administrator, who had made a two day journey just to perform that one act, was very much put out, but he knew the chief was technically within his rights. With admirable restraint—for he could easily have had Ibola removed on some trumped up charge—he declared the business at an end and went back to his post down river.

2

Our contacts with the government officials were rare enough—we did not see one half a dozen times a year—but they were very interesting.

When we came to Wema the territorial agent was a chap by the name of S——. I was in the midst of my first real hard bout of malaria when a squad of native soldiers arrived with the report that the agent was very ill with blackwater fever and would I come to see him at once. I was feeling about as miserable as possible, but malaria is only malaria and blackwater fever is blackwater fever, so I got out of bed and went my chill racked way to see what could be done for Monsieur S——.

That was the only time I ever made a trip in a *tepoi*. I always spurned this African palanquin as entirely too effeminate a form of travel for a self respecting man, but on that occasion I was only too glad to go jouncing along on the shoulders of four stalwart blacks.

It is a delight to watch a broad shouldered, narrow-hipped Bosekentula brave under a load. He surges forward with a peculiar, hitching motion and never lifts his feet off the ground more than enough for bare clearance. There is scarcely any bend to his knees as he walks. His gait is more of a shuffle than a walk, and he swings his legs

from the hips, rather than raising them and setting them down. Get four of them on a *tepoi* with one to call the song, and they really make speed. Their ability to cross the swamps on the slippery logs without dropping their cargo too often would do credit to a troupe of circus tight rope walkers.

On this particular night one of the soldiers went ahead and had a change of carriers at every village along the way, and they took me along at almost a run most of the time. For the first four or five hours of the journey it rained heavily, and I sat humped up in the wicker *tepoi* seat and contemplated the miseries of malaria. Once at the edge of a village, just after there had been a change of carriers, one of the front chaps slipped in a spot of mud and went down—the *tepoi* going down too. Before he could get back on his feet, one of the soldiers was on him and gave him a slap that must have jarred him to his toes, and he might have given him another if I had not come upright about that time and fetched the attacker a clip which, in spite of my fever, almost equalled the one he had landed on the carrier.

Along about midnight the rain stopped and a wavering misty moon began to show through the treetops. The *tepoi* men began to sing—a sort of explosive, rhythmic chant as they exhaled.

“Ka ka kaka ka Ka ka laka ka Ma ma maka ma Haa rrrah Bosongoi’ Over and over, mile after mile

Around four in the morning we came to the village where the agent was, and I went to work on him. By dint of perseverance and very bad French I made him drink about a gallon of lime juice and soda water an hour for several hours, left a few more gallons for his boy to give him, and turned in for the day.

By the next morning he was decidedly on the mend and so was I. I ordered up my *tepoi* and went swaying back to Wema.

Monsieur S—— went home and was replaced by Mon

sieur L——, a young man whose English was just about as bad as my French—at least I hope so. When our first boy was born I filled out the necessary record blank that had been furnished me, but failed, somehow, to put down the month. It was not long before I received a letter from Monsieur L——. "You must," the latter stated succinctly, "declare the mound of his borning day."

Monsieur L—— was followed at the post of Itoko by V——. He had with him his wife and little girl. They came once and stayed for several weeks at the state house in the native village nearby, just to be close to a doctor. They were quite delightful people. Madame was still very young, in spite of having another older daughter in Belgium, and was as naive and spontaneous as a child of six.

"Oh! Madame Davis," she would say, having come across some particularly treasured possession of my wife's, "I'd like to have that."

But she was just as generous with anything she had, and no one could hear her laugh and stay provoked with her. We spent a good many evenings playing bridge and mah-jong, and V—— and I played chess together now and then.

"Belgium against America," he always remarked. "No wonder I can't win against so big a' country."

One evening he came over to dinner at our house when his wife was away, and got started on the shortcomings of America and Americans. He had covered quite a number of our national sins and was about to begin again when my wife broke in:

"But Monsieur V——, you must remember that we are Americans."

I have never seen the wind go so completely out of anyone. He had been carrying on an entirely impersonal analysis and simply had not realized that there was any connection between us and what he said. When he did he was overcome with mortification.

"A thousand pardons," he exclaimed, pushing back from

the table, "but I think it is time that I should be going"
And he fled out the front door and down the path without waiting to get his hat

We were able to assure him, later, that we had not really felt badly about it, and he gradually assumed his natural air again, but he never made any further remarks about America

There was Monsieur B—— who came to dinner once and never said a word, in spite of all our efforts at conversation When dinner was announced he hurried to the table and was entirely through his soup before the rest of us were seated His wife bore up bravely till the meal was over and then took him off, to everybody's great relief

There was the debonaire D—— No matter where one came across him, on a boat, at his post, in some out-of-the-way native village, or along a forest path, his white clothes looked as if he had just put them on fresh from the laundry I do not know how he did it, or how he was able to go where he did on his motor cycle—journeys through the forest and over swamps where it was difficult enough to get even a bicycle Of course, as a high government official, he was able to command as much assistance from the natives as he wanted, but even with that he must have had some sort of wizardry to help him along

There was P——, who was taken with blackwater fever just as he was packing up his things for his first furlough He was to have gone six months earlier, but there was some hitch in replacing him and he had to stay over He was brought down river from Wafania to Lotumbe by a trader in his motor boat, and I stayed with him for three days and nights until he died His mother later sent a bronze head piece for his grave behind the Lotumbe church

There were R—— and his wife, who had been in the Congo many years He was a man of fixed ideas in tolerant of opinions other than his own He was hard on the natives, but he was harder on anyone who tried to

exploit them. He was not much loved, but he was respected and no one ever questioned his rectitude. He never mentioned it, but I think he hated to see the time for his retirement come, even though he had a little farm near Waterloo and often talked about how happy they were going to be together there. I venture to say that Waterloo will seem much paler than he thought it would when, in time to come, his mind compares it with Boëndě.

Once, a few years back, when Monsieur D—— came to "sit" at Lotumbe to settle some difficulty that had developed between several local villages, he had with him Monsieur and Madame M——. They were young, just out from Belgium for the first time, and entirely charming in their enjoyment of everything that the Congo had to offer. We had them up to our house for dinner with the rest of the station staff, and the night before they left Madame M—— insisted on having all the missionaries to a dinner at the state house.

Whatever visions of grandeur the words "state house" may invoke in some situations, they connote anything but luxury when referring to the Congo back country. The one at Lotumbe was nothing but a one room mud and thatch hut, with a fairly sizable front porch. But that did not deter Madame M——, nor did the fact that they were on a trip through the bush without access to any supplies except those they were carrying with them. Moreover, all cooking had to be done on an open fire.

In spite of these difficulties she served us a seven or eight course dinner that would have done credit to any first class dining room anywhere. The Belgians have a way with meats and sauces, and Madame served a dozen or so different kinds of fish, fowl, and game in most delectable fashion. If there ever was a picturesque setting for a dinner party, that certainly was it. With Monsieur D—— at his conversational best to help it along, she put over her dinner in fine style.

I think the most interesting figure of my acquaintance in the Congo was Basuta mingi. "Basuta mingi" is Bangala dialect for "lots of fat," and it fitted this man to perfection. I have forgotten his real name but he was the administrator of the Monkoto district and had spent some fifteen years in the colony. He was one of the hugest men I have even seen, and he was surprisingly solid for one so large.

E. B. Smith and I spent several days at Monkoto on an up river trip one fall and we saw quite a lot of Basuta mingi. Except for days when it rained, he kept a regular athletic schedule of one evening of tennis and the next of swimming year in and year out. It was amazing to watch him on the tennis court. There was little bend to him but he covered a lot of court in a sort of gliding fashion and he had an uncanny ability to reach out and return a placement that looked entirely out of his orbit. There were no back stops to the court, but some fifteen or twenty native prisoners were lined up around it to chase balls and make it unnecessary for the players to stoop over. Basuta mingi did not like to stoop.

As for swimming, he was really quite remarkable when he got afloat in his private pool. A sizable creek ran into the river about a half mile from the state compound and Basuta mingi had had a dam put across this so that a pool about fifty yards in length was formed. The main path between Monkoto and the villages up river passed directly by this pool, but when Basuta went out for a swim it was worth several months in chains for any native to as much as show his face.

Smith and I had nothing with us that might serve as swimming trunks, but when we suggested to the young Belgian clerk the possibility of going in naked he was sure that his chief would consider it very bad form. It appeared that it would be equally bad form not to turn up at all so we both sacrificed a pair of trousers apiece and cut them off to make acceptable garments for the occasion.

Each evening of the time that we were there we came back after having had our supper on our boat and sat about Bafuta mingi's courtyard sipping gtenadine—the only non alcoholic drink the Belgians know—and listening to his phonograph for which he had a wide and excellent selection of records. It seemed that these concerts were a sort of institution and attendance on them was *de rigueur* for all the members of the post—Bafuta himself the clerk and the territorial agent and his wife.

The government agents worked hard and it was a trying job. They had to do a vast amount of paper work—reports in triplicate of this and that down to the most insignificant items. They had to take the tax and keep a record card on every native in their territory—some ten to twenty thousand. They had to settle all manner of disputes between individuals and groups who were as cantankerous and exasperating as only Congo natives can be—mostly through failure of understanding but now and then it seemed deliberately. It was always a wonder to me that all of them did not go crazy.

Some few that I have known were tyrannical and unjust but most of them were not and in general they did their best to deal fairly and develop the country to the advantage of the natives.

CHAPTER VII

A CONGO PRACTICE

TEN years' practice of medicine in the Central African jungle has been a tremendous experience for me, though out there the competition is not keen and I had an unopposed practice in a section as big as the whole state of Connecticut.

Of course, there were the witch doctors. They were ubiquitous. They were—and are—the spiritual buzzards of Congo life, circling over human woe, searching with their preternaturally penetrating eyes for signs of failing strength, battening on the miseries of their fellow men. I never went to see a dying man, in all the years that I was there, that I did not find a native medicine man attending, too, or realize that he had barely got out of sight. It was not strange that this was so, for the witch doctor exists and maintains his power as a result of the beliefs of the people, and none of them might pass away in peace without his ministrations.

For aches and pains, for worms and rotten teeth and broken bones, for ulcers, tumours, itch, and lice, they often came to me. When things were going fairly well, when they were not too sick, when they had hope, then I might be their doctor. But if they thought that they were going to die, they reverted to what they had always known and consulted one who might prevail against the spirits. It was not that they thought less of me—nor I of them, for that matter—for I was admittedly great in healing body ills, but what they had to have in times of dire distress was something for their souls—some good, old-fashioned magic. But aside from these primitive faith healers I was the only

doctor for many, many miles in any section where I stayed. There was a lot of satisfaction in knowing that the need for me was great. I was not troubled with professional jealousy or with developing my clientele at the expense of some colleague. I do not know what the solution is, but there is something fundamentally wrong with a system where doctors must compete to care for human ills.

In the Congo there was no such problem as that and there was never any waiting for patients. There were so many of them that there have been times when I thought if I had to examine another Congo native I should blow up. For a while after we went to Wema, until we gained the confidence of the Bakutu and Basekentula peoples, we were not too busy, but as the natives learned that all we wanted was to help them, our practice grew apace. I say "our," for at that time I was working with an American trained nurse. I only had that opportunity for about a year, and for the rest of the time I was the only white member of the hospital staff, both at Wema and at Lotumbe.

During my last year at Lotumbe over 65,000 patients came to the hospital dispensary to be treated, and I performed 536 major operations. Moreover, it was necessary for me to be away from the station for nearly three months of the time, making trips into the back country where I treated a good many thousand more. Naturally the treatment accorded to a considerable number of the patients was of a very rudimentary nature, but we were able, I believe, to follow pretty closely the old Latin motto *primum est non nocere*.

We had our share of dramatic cures, for there is nothing more striking in medical therapy than the effect of neosalvarsan on a full blown case of yaws. The foul, disgusting, yellow pustules which cover the entire body of the sufferer frequently fade away in the course of a few days. One might almost say that they disappear before one's eyes. Small wonder that the natives came to consider that there

was magic in "the needle." It must have also seemed miraculous to them to see the results of the removal of an enormous elephantiasis of the scrotum. A man came to Lotumbe once, while I was there, who weighed 170 pounds, and after I had taken off his tumour I weighed him again and the scales showed only 90 pounds! Hundreds came who had scarcely walked for years, and returned home to their villages able to lead an active life.

And if there was but little of the theatrical in the pulling of aching teeth, the treatment of amœbic dysentery, or the slow healing of an ulcer of the leg, it does not mean that the patient was less relieved.

The rewards of a doctor's life come in an appreciable measure from the feeling that he has relieved suffering even though he realizes that if he had not Dr Jones next door probably would have. It might even have been a case where he drove an extra mile or two an hour to get to the sufferer before Dr Jones could.

However that may be in civilized countries, it is especially gratifying to the practitioner in the Congo to feel that he has ministered to the acute physical needs of a numerous people whom he, and he alone, could serve. Whatever the future may hold for me, nothing can rob me of the satisfying feeling that for a number of years I was able to pull some teeth and set some bones and lance some boils that would have gone untreated but for me, that I have been the doctor for countless souls who otherwise would have had no doctor at all.

The native boys and the few native women who worked with me in the hospital and dispensary, both at Lotumbe and at Wema, were excellent helpers. The ordinary Congolese absorbs theoretical knowledge—book learning—very, very slowly, but the things they do by hand, the manual techniques, are picked up and perfected rapidly. For instance, such things as giving intravenous injections making gland punctures and spinal punctures, pulling teeth

task of trying to keep peace among the patients on the hospital grounds. He did right well at it, too, considering the warlike character of the tribes around that section of the country. He was, without doubt, the most popular native I have ever known, everybody liked him.

Since he was always around the hospital, I gradually gave him more and more to do about the place, and as time went on he became the most responsible and effective worker of all the hospital force. When Itôkô decided to spend some months in hunting for a wife, Benno became the head assistant, and if I had been pleased with the other two boys I was doubly so with him. He had some trouble with his mathematics and his record book was apt to look a good bit like the scratchings of a hen, but he was entirely dependable—a quality sufficiently rare among the natives.

It was a joy to make a journey through the back country with that boy, for he was known by almost everyone and I have never witnessed such handshakings and back pattings as occurred when he came into a village. He had the broadest foot and widest mouth of anyone of equal size I have ever seen, and almost always had a smile upon the latter. He remained unspoiled as long as I knew him and I hope he still is.

Again, when Bometela left Lotumbe, I did not think that he could possibly be replaced, but Bolisomi, nicknamed Ngindo (The Ladder) because he was so tall, stepped in and carried things along about as well, it seemed to me, as Bometela had.

They were good fellows all of them, and so were all the rest I have not named. They did not lack peculiarities—people anywhere seldom do—and they had characteristics that were well adapted to making a white man grey before his time. Even Bometela did *not* completely measure up to my ideas about perfection, but as I think of them in retrospect, I smile because my thoughts of them are pleasant.

I think that I liked Bometela best of all the natives I have known, although there were others that run him close. When I first met him, he had just been put in as head hospital boy at Lotumbe by Dr. Jaggard, who had come from Monieka to take over the medical work for a few months until I got back from furlough. During the next four years we were very closely associated, and I do not believe in all that time he ever failed to do the things expected of him. A lot was expected of him, too, for when I saw that he was capable of doing it, I turned over a lot of the hospital work to him and gave him the responsibility of looking after all the major and minor ills of the local village. He called me in for consultation whenever he thought it necessary. I got to know him very well, I think, in our contacts at the hospital, on our calls together to see the sick of the neighbourhood, and on our itineraries together through the forest. Often, after we had been to see some patient together, we would stand leaning on our bicycles at the division of our paths and carry on long conversations on nearly every possible subject.

I have never known a more gracious, tactful individual of any race or background, and he could quarrel without yelling—an almost impossible feat for a native African. On the mornings when we gave injections of neosalvarsan there was always a great crowd of natives pushing and crowding and milling around—everyone trying to get up to the desk first, everyone talking at once and attempting to make himself heard above everyone else. We tried to get them to form in line, but we never succeeded very well and became more or less resigned to having a bi-weekly bedlam. Not that the other days were quiet; quite the contrary! But on Wednesdays and Saturdays the noise and confusion were worse than usual.

And the smell! The Lotumbe dispensary had a front porch about eighteen by eighteen feet and then a receiving room about fourteen by eighteen, and back of that

two small examination rooms with a hall between. That hallway opened out upon a big room for the treatment of ulcers and the giving of fomentations, and then there were two more small rooms, and that was all. On busy mornings—and every morning was busy except when it rained—the receiving room was always fuller than full. We kept the drugs there and did the laboratory work and handed out the pills and pulled the teeth—as a matter of fact we did practically everything wherever we happened to be when the over-impertunate patient finally overcame our resistance.

“All right. All right. Can’t you see I’m busy? All right. Somebody hand me those forceps” And I would stop and pull a tooth—we never needed dental chairs or gas or local anæsthetics or anything like that—or open an abscess or examine an eye or a nose or an ear, and then go on to do whatever it was I had started to do.

But about the smell: for a large proportion of the Congolese bathing is, to put it mildly, infrequent, and the cumulative body odours of a hundred unwashed blacks is rather awful. And halitosis! A barrel of mouth-wash would be required to sweeten the breath of one inconsiderable Congo village. When we got that small room full of halitosis and body odour and pus and slough and flyblown flesh, the stench was strong enough to drive a man to desperation.

Bometela never got excited or lost his head, and if he was angry now and then, he did not show it very much. When I was writing down the names and taking in the cash, I could not pass a dozen of them by without beginning to lose my patience, and I was apt to talk a little loud and bawl them out for doing things the way they did. There have been times . . . but I refuse to testify, too much, against myself.

Congo natives are the greatest hagglers in the world. They always asked a dozen prices for the articles they sold,

and when it came to paying for a thing they rarely failed to try to work some sort of scheme to beat the game.

We charged just enough for "neo" to pay for the drug and to take care of breakage in the equipment that we used. It ran around five francs—some fifteen cents—a dose and time after time the natives would come up with only one or two or three francs and try to work upon our sympathies to give it to them for what they had. They could take me in, but they could not often fool the other natives. I always had Bongembe, my hospital sentry, stand beside me and when anyone came up short of money I used to look at him and he would say, "Let them have it," or "Make them pay," and that was what I did. Over and over again, the ones who protested the loudest that they had no more with which to pay would, in the end, reach down into their bundles of belongings and bring forth the necessary amount and never bat an eye. Sometimes they would have to turn and ask some friend or relative nearby, and he would hand it out or they would go away and come back in a minute or two with what they lacked. Such tactics always angered me, but Bometela never seemed to mind and he was polite no matter how often they tried to fool him. It is doubtful, too, if he was fooled very often. I had a very good opinion of his judgment, and when he said that he thought a patient needed service free I said so, too.

I think that I felt surer of Bometela's honesty than of any other native's. (There's that word honesty again and it is hard of definition. How honest are big-business men? Whose money was it that the so-called great philanthropists gave away?) I venture to say that no two people anywhere could agree upon the actual meaning of the word, and certainly the Congolese are apt to construe it loosely. But I never, in all my dealings with this lad, discovered a circumstance that made me even slightly suspicious as to his adherence to anything but the strictest sort of honesty. I may be wrong. He may have just been clever; and I admit to

"Yes," replied Bométela, "I am."

"We'll see about that," said the doctor. "I have an operation to be done right now and I will have you do it. But I warn you of this, that if the patient doesn't recover satisfactorily you will be put in chains."

"All right," answered Bometela, although the doctor's attitude had rather taken him aback, "where is the operation that you want me to do?"

He was taken, he continued in his letter, to the operating room where they already had a patient with a very large elephantiasis on the table. He gave the man a spinal anæsthetic and went ahead with the removal of the tumour.

"*Ko emi njolonga o boloci mongo.* (And I came out very well indeed.)"

I wish I could have been a spectator at the operation. It must have been a big moment in Bometela's life, for the natives love dramatic incidents like that.

The doctor, he said, was greatly astonished and made a good deal of the affair. "*Aokamwa, nkakamwa, o kamo.* (He wondered, wonderingly with great wonder.)" He gave him an excellent position at a comparatively high salary, and the last I heard, Bometela was still there.

2

"*Inonga. Inonga. Ino. Inonga e e! Betswaka.*"

From a great distance I gradually came back to earth. With a supreme effort I forced myself awake—half awake. Someone was banging on our back door, calling out my name in Lonkundo, and telling me to wake up.

"*Onka na?* (Who is it?)"

"*Iso. Bolumbu la Ncimbo.* (It is we, Bolumbu and Ncimbo.)"

I wish I had a dollar for every time that scene had been enacted in the middle of the night, with those two native

whom I worked, although they were all interesting, but I want to mention two more. One was Bongembe, the hospital sentry (Sentry). Sentries, if such they may be called, are quite an institution in the Congo. Everybody has a lot of them around. At Lotumbé, for instance, there were two general sentries—one for day and one for night—who "sat" in a tiny sentry house back of the line of mission houses. They carried messages and ran errands met boats at the beach, chased goats, attempted to subdue loud noises at siesta time, and were supposed to prevent molestation of mission and personal property. There was a sentry at the church, another at the carpenter shop, and one at the hospital.

As sentry at the hospital, Bongembe was a general handy man and master of ceremonies. He assigned all incoming patients to rooms in the hospital huts—often crowding a dozen or so in a room and making them like it. He heard all grievances and settled all quarrels. Grievances and quarrels were frequent, too, and the former were expressed and the latter carried on in no uncertain tones. No one has ever understood viciousness of voice until he has listened to Congo women having a bout of words.

Bongembe kept a record of all the bonafide patients staying on the hospital compound, and divided among them the two or three tons of cassava and other produce that I bought for them on Saturday mornings. That job alone would have driven a white man crazy at once. He was always around to lend a helping hand whenever it was necessary at the dispensary, and was the overseer and head of the hospital work squad—a group of chronic and crippled cases who worked around the hospital grounds in return for treatment and two francs a week. He encouraged the living and saw to the burial of the dead. A very stout fellow was Bongembe and I was proud of the name by which the patients very often called me. Is'ongembe (the Father of Bongembe).

The second chap was named Mpeno, and he had worked off and on as a hospital boy since the beginning of the medical work at Lotumbe, some fifteen years earlier. He was older than any of the other boys except Bongembe, and he was lazy and extremely dumb. He was a likeable cuss, though, and I kept him on the payroll and figured that he was well worth his salary because he so consistently flattered me. He used to stand around near me, when he should have been at work somewhere else, and delivered himself of such comments as, "You listen to this white man, He's not like other white men" Or: "*Wanya mongo?*" (Isn't he just wisdom itself?)

When I was operating—no matter what sort of a job I was doing—his unfailing remark was always, "Look, isn't that just *too* beautiful?"

A fellow like that was much too comforting to discharge, and I would have let him have a job indefinitely, in spite of the fact that he was practically worthless, but he, too, had that persistent malady of trouble with his wife. And in this case she killed him.

Perhaps it is wrong to say a thing like that without positive proof, but I am sure enough in my own mind, at least, and she will not sue me for libel.

They had been having trouble for a long time and he was apt to beat her up in old-fashioned Congo style. Perhaps he should have, for all I know, for she was just about as trifling as she could be. She would not raise a garden and she would not cook his food—both of those are heinous crimes in Congo eyes. She ran around with other men and dressed beyond her means and had the sharpest and most quarrelsome tongue among a hundred in a land where women sharpen their tongues frequently.

I will say this for the hussy: she was good to look upon. She walked along as lithely as some spotted forest cat (and flipped her hips and bounced her breasts as only well-appointed native women can).

Her beauty made her proud, I suppose, and so she felt she did not have to work or look after her husband. His only recourse was to give her a good pounding every now and then. He pounded her once too often, though, for she began to put poison in his food and he began to go downhill.

I say she poisoned him because it looked that way. In the best of health, he suddenly became very ill. He suffered from his stomach and had severe intestinal cramps and spells of vomiting. We tested him out for everything it might have been except poison and could not find a thing wrong. He went from bad to worse and died within a few weeks' time. I am just as sure as I am sitting here that his wife did him in.

Of course, the natives knew it all the time, for killing a husband in that way is just an old Congo custom, and not a thing at which to wonder greatly. I tried my best to get his family to let me make a post-mortem examination of the body, but they would not hear of it. The woman was not hied to court and sentenced to be hanged, but retribution came upon her just the same. Mpeno's brother came and took her home with him to be one of his harem. He stripped her of her fancy clothes and made her work and told her that he knew what she had done. The other people knew it, too, and did not fail to rub it in and make her life a most unhappy one. I saw her, once, when I was on a trip, and though a year had scarcely passed she was so changed I doubted that it was the same woman.

I missed Mpeno's flattery, and I shall never meet another so consistent in his praise as he. I hope he rests in peace, for he did my ego such a lot of good.

CHAPTER VIII

CONGO COMPLAINTS

THERE are a lot of interesting features about the practice of medicine in the Congo. It is one thing to have a toothache where there are plenty of dentists and only his own indisposition prevents a person from having the offending tooth properly attended to. It is an entirely different thing to live in a land where toothache is toothache and that's that—until, perhaps, the tooth rots out. People in such a situation develop a fatalistic attitude toward pain and disease. I have known more than a few natives, living within a day's travel of the hospital, who sat at home and allowed some malignant, phagedenic, tropical ulcer to eat away half a leg and permanently cripple them—not because they doubted the efficacy of our treatment or had any feeling against it; not because they would have had undue difficulty in making the journey; but simply because ulcers of that sort have always been common and it has been traditional to do nothing about them.

And take good old-fashioned scabies. A native will live alongside a dispensary for years and be well covered with itch for all that time and never bestir himself to walk over and get a few treatments of sulphur ointment. After all, itch¹ is only itch. The attitude of doing nothing about anything until compelled to do so is highly developed among the Congolese.

But there is, also, another side to the picture. An average of more than two hundred patients came each day to the Lotumbe dispensary to be treated. New groups kept arriving all the time—from far and near. They came on foot along the interminable, winding forest paths—making

journeys of a day or two or three, sometimes a week or more. Their progress often was slow, for they were sick. They had to carry food along, for sometimes they could buy at villages along the way and sometimes they could not. And so they put their baskets on their women's backs and with their cooking pots and water gourds and bits of food they came to get some of the white man's magic for their ills. Sometimes they found a lodging in an empty house close by some not unfriendly village. Sometimes they built a fire beside the path and spent the night without shelter other than the jungle trees.

Some came who could not walk, carried in a blanket or a hunting net tied on a pole and slung between the shoulders of two men, or toted pick-a-back. I have seen a dozen in a day who rode that way for mile on mile upon the backs of wives or relatives or friends. A woman will carry a woman and a woman will carry a man, but never a man a woman.

One man I knew—he had a hernia which hung below his knees—inched his way along for four full weeks to come to me for an operation. I shall think of that some day when I am short of cash and I shall remember that he ran back home to hunt and fish and marry a wife.

Many came by the river in canoes. Now and then there would be a whole flotilla of them. There was a large tribal area just north of the junction of the Momboyo and the Tshuappa rivers and the people used to paddle up from there in regular fleets of canoes—a three- or four-day voyage. It was the Chelferie of Bonyanga, and while I never made a trip through there I think that nearly every man, woman, and child in that section of the country must surely have been to Lotumbe to the hospital at least once.

When they arrived at the hospital compound, Bongembe found them places in one of the long lines of hospital huts where they could be at home. At home, because we built

the present village to Ngembe some four miles up the river was occupied with the houses of the *Elinga* (fishermen) people. But sleeping sickness wiped them out. For several years the epidemic raged and took a terrible toll of life, decimating whole villages, and then for some unaccountable reason it gradually subsided. During my stay at Lotumbe I saw not more than twelve to fifteen cases in a year, and they were almost all from other sections. Why it comes and goes the way it does, I do not know. There is never any lack of tsetse flies to spread the noxious microscopic worms—if one may class trypanosomes as worms—and whatever caused the dying-out of the disease, it could not have been the fault of these persistent pests.

However that may be, this African plague attacks section after section—at first an isolated case or two, and then it spreads until there seems to be no stopping it, and then it dies out. Not rapidly, though, for it is a slow disease and this cycle of change takes years.

Nkange ea baisilo was what the natives called it in Lonkundo dialect, and they feared it desperately. They had good reason, for they had no defence against it, nor any way to mitigate or cure its awful effects. Until recently, to contract it meant inevitable death. Anyone who has ever seen an advanced case, lying upon the ground as if dead, with wasted form and staring eyes, must always feel acutely the need of pressing the fight against this scourge of the Central African black. It will be a hard battle, for in spite of the terror which the malady inspires, the co-operation of the natives is hard to get. At Wema, where we treated about fifty cases a week—in that region the disease seemed *neither to be dying-out nor gaining ground*—we were hard put to it to get the patients to stay for a full course of treatment. As soon as they began to show a decided improvement, they went back home.

Eventually tryparsamide will win—tryparsamide and the

changing conditions of native life—but there is still a long and difficult fight ahead.

2

One of the things that living in the Congo does for a person is to bring about a change in his feelings regarding leprosy. It is difficult to estimate, but I should guess that anywhere from 1 to 3 per cent. of the population in sections where we were had this disease. And with them it was just another kind of illness—nothing to make a special fuss about. A leper who was fairly fit went on about his business with the rest of the folk, and ate and drank and slept and mingled with his family and friends almost entirely without stigma. It was only after he became unable to carry on or was badly deformed that his status changed—when big ulcers developed and his toes dropped off and his face became swollen and warty. Then they would make him live apart in some old, deserted shelter which had half fallen down. There he was liable to succumb to pneumonia, malnutrition, or some intercurrent infection, and was apt to do it shortly. Whereupon his relatives would wildly mourn—lest it be thought that they had done him ill—and put him in a shallow grave, and that would be that.

No matter how strongly convinced a person may be that leprosy is only mildly contagious, the fact remains that when he comes in contact with lepers and has to shake their hands and sit beside them in a church and operate upon them and treat their leprosy and their other ills, he has an uncomfortable feeling. As time goes on, however, he gets used to them, and when the natives come to visit him, the lepers with the rest, he brings them into his house and has them sit upon his chairs and eat from his dishes, and thinks very little of it.

Leprosy presents quite a difficult problem in a country



NKOI WHO WOUNDED HIMSELF WITH AN ARROW
WHILE TRYING TO SHOOT A RIVAL
(see page 122)

admiration for Beuno knew no bounds. His sun rose in me and set in the hospital boy. One day, at least a year before we came away, I told him when I left I would give him my helmet as a parting gift. His lumpy face was absolutely wreathed in smiles and I am certain that he never missed a day, from then on, reminding me about the promise I had made.

Speaking of the odd feeling that one has about contacts with the lepers makes me think of the frequency with which one washes his hands during his first days in the Congo. The tendency is not to touch anything except when absolutely unavoidable, and then to run and wash in lysol water with the greatest care. But that habit wears off and soon familiarity breeds contempt. I blush to admit that I have worked all morning with the great unwashed, and scarcely given a thought to washing myself when I came home for lunch.

I cannot pass to other subjects without first remarking on the Congo cough. I know that everywhere, except in Central Africa, a cough is considered a symptom—a symptom and not a disease. But in the Congo such is not the case. A Congo cough is a primary thing. It is an inherited characteristic. The Congolese are born with it—from coughing fathers out of coughing mothers. They cough upon their entrance into life. Their cough continues with them all their days, and in the end, if, indeed, their cough does not carry them off, they carry it off with them.

It may be chronic irritation from the smoky atmosphere they breathe throughout the whole of every night as long as they exist. It may be a bronchitis induced by unwise exposure, or it may be simply an imitative act passed down from generation to generation, but whatever may be the cause, there was always a great demand for cough medicine at the dispensary. I made a thick Brown Mixture by the barrellful and had it ladled down the native

throats in a vain attempt to stem the rising tide of tickles in the throat.

3

The Congolese are a tough people. Infant mortality is tremendous, but if an individual is able to surmount the hazards of the first two or three years of life, he has a proven constitution. If a child withstands the assaults of the innumerable bacteria to which he is subjected in early life, he develops an enormous resistance to infection and is extremely hard to kill. Only the hardiest of the race survive, and to the great satisfaction of the surgeon they have about the same propensities as baling wire and a persistence just about as strong as sin. Of the 540 cases of major surgery I performed in the last year, only four died—a mortality of less than 1 per cent. That constitutes a most remarkable tribute to their tenacious grip on life.

I was not always so lucky. One year it ran to almost 5 per cent, and I think that the average would be in the neighbourhood of two. In my earlier years I was even less wise than I am now and I came out from America and England, fresh from experiences in large and carefully conducted hospitals, with some rather fixed notions on how an operative patient ought to be treated. I objected to the patients having a dozen or so relatives in the same room with them. I refused to allow fires to be built by each bedside, and attempted to maintain some semblance of cleanliness and order. But as time went on and I became more lenient and slipshod, I found that my cases did better. If they could shut all the windows and doors so that there was not a breath of air; if they could have a fire right up against them and let the smoke become so thick in the un-ventilated room that it could be shovelled; if they could have all their relatives and friends crowded into the same room—and frequently two or three in the same bed—with them both night and day; if they were not bothered too

much about being sanitary; if they could live as they were wont to live at home—then they were happy and got well. They suffered if I tried to keep them clean. They had to be in homelike circumstances or they pined away. The dirtier I allowed them to be, the quicker they improved.

I came to the conclusion that even the crude brick structure that we built for permanent hospital wards were mistakes. I liked the ones constructed in the native fashion better, for when they got so smelly and dirty that I felt something had to be done, I could have them burned down and new ones built for a very trifling sum. And I believe that the patients were more at ease with roofs of thatch and walls and floors of mud.

I do not suppose our operating-room technique would have received any prizes from a group of hospital inspectors, but it served us cheaply and effectively. If I could have taken some head nurses I have known and made them stand and watch us as we did one major case, it might have caused their death, for our Congo surgery was of the rough-and-ready backwoods type.

No, ours was not a metropolitan technique. Simplicity was the keynote of the cutting that we did—of the cutting and of the other things as well. The Wema hospital, when I arrived, consisted of a single hut of mud and thatch and an adjacent open shed. The hut contained an inner room for storing medicine and other goods, which we could lock securely, and an outer one where we had a sort of desk. The two together were no more than fifteen feet in length and maybe nine in width. The other shack was nine by twelve, perhaps, and was our treatment room, examination room, and all the rest. That was where we operated, too.

Our operating table was unique. It was a wide, two-inch board laid across two saw horses, and we could adjust it to any position that we chose by merely putting another

block of wood under any part of it. When we finished all we had to do was carry off the patient, board and all, and *dump him into bed—or rather dump him on his mat upon the floor, for beds were scarce at Wema*

For a couple of years the only sterilizer that we had was a tiny Arnold pressureless steamer, which we heated on an open fire. In fact all heating had to be done on open fires because there was nothing else. Our rubber gloves were sterilized by sloshing them off in a pan of lysol water, because in that climate they went bad all too soon without applying other forms of heat. In many instances we wore the gloves very largely just for looks, for they were often full of holes, but when a man is used to having them it is difficult to get the feel of things without them.

Perhaps it may be wondered why we did not patch the holes. We did sometimes, but rubber solution in the Congo climate is not as good as it might be, and if I must be honest, I shall admit I did not like the job and when I left it to the boys they made a mess of it.

The hospital wards at Wema were made of leaves—big leaves laid on in overlapping rows like tiles on a roof, and fastened on the upright posts with split reeds tied with vines. These leafy huts were long and low and separated into tiny rooms where one or two—or nine or ten—of the patients stayed while they were with us. The operative patients stayed there, too, on low, board bottomed beds without a mattress, or simply on a mat upon the ground. And they did better there than they would ever have done in a private room such as we have at home.

We gave each patient two blankets at the time of operation, but he had no sheets. His relatives took care of him. They were his private nurses and he could have as many as he chose. We kept an eye on him and them, but they did all the work except caring for the wound. When he was ready to go home they washed the blankets in the

river and made them ready for the next case. The blankets cost us thirty-five or forty cents apiece and did not always survive a great many washings.

Operating in the open shed made it nice for the relatives and friends of the patient, for they could all crowd in and watch. And when I say they could I mean they did. I would give a lot to have a picture of some operations I have done in that dirt-floored and thatch-roofed shed. The night, for instance, that I removed a three-barbed arrow from a chieftain's chest. What a mob of naked savages that was! That night they had their war paint on and they were only waiting till they found out if the chief was going to die before they went to wreak their vengeance on the guilty one and on the members of his tribe. They all agreed the chief was in the wrong—that he had got nothing more than his deserts—but blood was spilled and they would have to have blood from the other side before the matter could be dropped.

On the day that our first boy was born I had to leave almost at once to amputate an old man's leg. I left a native boy to watch my wife and baby—there were no whites within a two days' journey—and to bring me word if anything untoward occurred, and went to see what I could do about the man they had just brought in from a village far across the river. He was a man of prominence and very old, and I do not believe I have ever seen so big a crowd with any other patient. A tree had fallen on his leg and crushed it several days before, and they had had a dozen local medicine men and they had done their stuff to no avail, and so at last they made the journey of about a day to me.

I talked to him and to his family a while and told them that I doubted whether I could do him any good, but if they wished I would amputate the leg and there would be a slim chance for his recovery. His family was against it but he was for it, so he had his way.

The old man's leg was badly mashed, and four or five days' exposure of the open flesh in the tropical temperature had produced an odour which can be imagined but not described. It was one o'clock when we got around to doing the operation and about as hot as it can get. There must have been two hundred natives crowding in around us, shutting off what little air might otherwise have made it possible for us to breathe. I disarticulated the leg at the hip, and do not know to this day how I kept from suffocating long enough to finish the job, or how it was that the cloud of insects did not carry us away.

The patient lingered on for three more days but could not make the grade—he was too toxic. Beuno had seen to the burying of the amputated leg, but when the old man died the relatives found out where it was and dug it up and took it home to bury with the rest of him.

Surgery is a dramatic art even to those who are most accustomed to it, and of the things a surgeon does none is more striking than Cæsarian section. Done in a modern operating room with all the scientific paraphernalia of the present day at hand and all the nurses and attendants standing round—with floodlights and spotlights illuminating the scene—it is theatrical in its effect.

I did one once without the benefit of all those modern props, against a background of jungle trees. There were no nurses dressed in white, no interns, lights, carts, or hard, tiled floors—nothing but a board to lay the patient on and over everything the soft illumination of the tropic afternoon. They brought the woman in from several days away and she had been in labour for a long, long time. I did not think she had a chance to live, but mindful of the toughness of her tribe I went ahead. Itoko helped me—he was very badly scared—and all around us stood her people with their bodies smeared with clay because they felt so sure that she would die. I was acutely conscious of the histrionic character of the situation and the onlookers must

have been equally, if not more, affected for it was entirely new to them. I have never known a bunch of blacks to be as quiet as they were, but when I brought the baby out and handed it, alive and squalling, to Beuno, their reserve gave way and they became as voluble as they had been silent a short time before.

The mother had a rather stormy time, but she was able to go home within a month and she named the baby after me.

4

I never attempted to bring any pressure whatever upon any of the patients in order to get them to submit to even the most necessary procedures. If one of them suddenly announced that he was going home on the second day after a major operation, I did not try to argue the matter with him. I simply told him that I thought it would be extremely unwise and that I would not be responsible for the outcome of his case if he went, but I did not try to detain him. If I acted as if I did not much care if they went or not, they usually remained, but if I tried to urge them, they were apt to get excited and have their relatives take them away. For the aboriginal African in such situations reminds one very much of a park squirrel getting a nut out of a strange hand. They are strongly averse to being ill away from home, and if they get very sick or imagine that they might possibly die, they feel an almost irresistible compulsion to get to their own villages. A Congolese feels very strongly that he must die at home. I suppose he thinks that there the spirits are more propitious, and that his own will linger round the old familiar haunts when he is gone.

In order to relieve their fears of coercion, I adapted one of their own expressions and used it many times a day—*"Endoko tofa la bonyolo. (Here we have no chains to bind you.)"*

I often found that a sufferer from some surgical condition was quite willing to undergo the necessary operation, but that his relatives were not and tried to dissuade him. I was about to operate for a mastoid on the younger brother of a local chief, one day at Wema, and had the fellow all draped and on the table ready to start, when the chief himself arrived and ordered the patient to go home. The chap must have recognized his master's voice, for he jumped off the table and went flying down the path into the forest—sheet, drapes, mastoid, and all!

5

At Wema it might have been possible to qualify for the rank of military surgeon, for there was rarely a day that passed without a goodly number of knife or spear wounds to be treated. One inter-village fracas yielded us about seventy cases in one day. That battle started because one man so far forgot himself as to murder his wife in her own home town. If he had killed her in his village, he would have been considered more foolish than culpable for having destroyed good property, but to have made an end of her while she was visiting her own people was a transgression of an age-old taboo—a crime that only blood could expiate.

The result was that quite a lot of blood was spilled, and after they decided that enough had flowed to wash away the villainy the man had done, they all came down, en masse, to Wema to be repaired.

The Congolese are very sporting in their fights. Two of them will have a go at it with knives and one of them will cut half a shoulder off the other. Then, being one up on his opponent, he takes it easy for a while until he is himself the recipient of a similar wound. Then they figure they have had enough and go along and get patched up. Since they are equally wounded, they are both satisfied,

but if one of them should happen not to give as good as he received, the fight is never really over until he does—even though it may take years to get things evened up. As soon as an eye is had for an eye or a tooth is taken for a tooth, everyone is happy, but they will never stop until the balance is attained.

If there is a fight between the members of two different villages and two men from X are killed and only one from Y, the fight continues till the casualties on either side are equal. And the fools are so constituted that if they are winning out they have a tendency to ease up a bit on their fighting and let the other side catch up. I suppose the duelling code had its origins in some such attitudes as these.

I do not mean to say that there were not plenty of inequalities in the results of their affrays. Almost anyone was apt to lose his head a bit in the excitement of the moment and forget to be polite. And sometimes there were slips even when the intentions were good, or one bit harder than he planned.

One of the commonest types of wound—and they were mean ones to repair—was that of the palm of the hand. A man, in order to save himself from getting cut on the body, would grasp his opponent's knife and get a permanently crippled hand. I have sewed many palmar tendons back together.

On the morning that I first arrived at Wema, two of the mission workmen had staged a fight and I was just in time to sew them up. One of them had a thumb almost cut off and the other had a gash on his upper arm that opened up the circumflex humeral artery. It was a bloody introduction to the place where we were to live, and it proved to be a rather accurate indication of the sort of thing I had to do throughout my stay. Someone was always getting cut around that part of the world, and I got in on a lot of the sewing-up.

Not infrequently I got in on it a bit too late. I remember one instance in particular where brothers got into an argument over which one was the better fighter of the two, and it turned out that the older one was. Their father had had an operation at the hospital, and it had been necessary to keep him with us for quite a while. He was a man of some importance and he had with him a big retinue of wives and braves—among them these two sons. I got to know them very well—fine, upstanding, beautifully proportioned young fellows with broad shoulders and narrow hips and muscles like acrobats.

On the morning that we let the old man go home they all departed in high good humour—the man himself in a *tepoi*, the women with their loads and the dozen or so young men with their knives and spears. They left around nine or ten o'clock. At noon we heard a great commotion at the edge of the clearing and looked up to see the same young men come rushing back along the path carrying two of their number in blankets tied to poles. They were the two brothers. They had been crossing the first swamp when their argument over their respective merits as warriors reached its height, and they decided then and there to put it to the test.

It must have been quite a battle, for they were both literally hacked to pieces. I sewed up half a dozen deep cuts in the older man and maybe fifteen minor ones as well, but the younger boy was dead. His thigh had been cut clean to the bone and he had bled to death. They had packed their wounds with the mashed up leaves of some tree that they always use and it had been effective in stopping the blood from most of the cuts but nothing in the way of a styptic herb could stop the bleeding from an open artery the size of a soda straw.

I think the most humiliated fighter I have ever seen was Nkoi (The Leopard). He did not look or act much like a leopard, for he was tall and skinny and he had the

flattest feet that anyone could ever have and still shuffle around. He and another chap in one of the workmen's rows of huts had had some trouble over a woman, and they had breathed threats back and forth for some time. One day Nkoi came home to find the woman and the other man together in the latter's hut, and he decided to kill him then and there. He dashed back into his own shack to get his bow and arrows, got tangled up in a hunting net that was lying on the floor, and ran one of his own arrows almost entirely through his chest. I took the arrow out, along with a considerable piece of his sternum, and he lived to be laughed at unmercifully by everyone who knew the circumstances of his wound.

I found that it was dangerous to operate on anyone who had a guilty conscience, for he was apt to become obsessed with the idea that the one whom he had wronged was using some sort of witchcraft against him, and would develop the most weird neuroses. Sometimes one of them would go on and die in spite of everything that could be done—a victim of his own emotional instability.

Iyo was such a one. He was one of my early patients at Wema—a husky young fellow who came in to have a small hernia repaired. (I say "small," meaning small for the Congo, but it would be considered a large one here in this country.) I operated on him and everything was going as well as possible for two or three days, when all of a sudden he decided that he had been bewitched. He had happened to glance out of his hut and had seen a man going by on the path with whom he had once had some difficulty. That was too much for Iyo. He was sure that the man he had seen was invoking strong medicine in order to work him ill, and he entirely lost his grip on his morale. He was convinced that he was going to die and nothing that I could do or say had any influence on him whatsoever.

"*Njifobwā. Njifobwa* (I am going to die. I am going

to die),” he kept repeating over and over. And die he did. He refused to eat or drink from that time on and passed out as a result of starvation and violent apprehension. He had been scared to death!

I do not know where that expression “scared to death” originated, but it might very well have been in the Congo. In spite of a very strong, natural scepticism I have seen a number of cases where I was forced to believe that death was caused by fear alone.

Inonga’s wife was one of them. He was a man of middle age from a village some miles above Wema, and he became a Christian about the time that we came there to live. Both his family and his wife’s family had been very much opposed to his acceptance of the new religion, and in order to get away from their continual criticism he moved to the mission. There he went to school and rapidly developed into an effective evangelist—all native preachers are called evangelists in mission parlance.

Everything went along smoothly enough for several years, and then one day two of his wife’s brothers came to visit her. I have no idea what they said to her, or even if they said anything at all, but in some way she got the idea that they had put a curse upon her and she went absolutely to pieces. Efunza Filipo, the pastor of the Wema church, came to call me about five in the afternoon and I went down at once.

She was surrounded, of course, by a big crowd of excited friends and she was putting on one of the strangest acts I have ever seen. She was sitting upright on the ground in front of their hut and panting—not an ordinary sort of shortness of breath, but a deliberate, rapid gasping of the air. She kept it up for minutes and minutes until she was entirely exhausted, and then fell back into a kind of stupor. I examined her as carefully as possible, and I could discover nothing organically wrong with her. She was, I thought, hysterical; nothing more. I tried to talk with her but she

would do nothing but moan. I attempted to give drink of water but she would not drink nor would she any medicine. About every five minutes she would cough enough to put on another spasm of panting.

I discussed with Efunza and her husband the possibility of giving her a heavy dose of morphine by hypodermic but they were both against it because of the reaction it might have among her people. I thought that faith would finally overcome her and that she would be all right again when she got over her scare. I was wrong. B called me about four o'clock the next morning, saying she had just died. In her case, and in the case of the four others with the circumstances of whose deaths I am well acquainted, there was nothing except fear to which could have possibly ascribed their death.

I believe I am right when I say that it is the common feeling among the missionaries and others who have spent considerable time in the Congo that the witch doctor is capable, at times, to kill their victims through the power of fear. It is hard to believe that such things can happen, the longer one lives in contact with the Congolese the more impossible it becomes not to believe that they do.

To the Congo native all disease is the result of the pleasure of some spirit, or of some charm invoked against or curse put on the sufferer by some enemy. All medicine is magic.

A man comes into the dispensary with a badly infected arm. "How long have you had this swelling and pain in your arm?" I ask him.

"Well," he replies, "it's this way. My brother-in-law and I quarrelled over the meat of a crocodile that we killed and he put a curse on me and ever since then I have had this bad arm."



BAKUTU BRAVI

This man killed his brother in the fight
described in the book



BAKUTI BRAVE WITH WAR STICK

logic has so little chance in competition with emotion * The primitive and modern look so far apart and are in many ways, so close I was impatient, oftentimes, at the inherent native resistance to accepting common sense Even the ones who had, apparently, most discarded the old supernatural ideas still had them firmly fixed in their unconscious thoughts

One day Bongembe developed a badly swollen foot and went hobbling around for a week or so He never asked for any advice or medicine from me, even though he was around me all the time After some days I asked him what was the matter with his foot and he replied in all matter-of-factness that he must have stepped in some animal excreta while in the forest All the rest of the hospital boys were standing near at the time They fell into a discussion of which kinds of dung caused the most serious afflictions when stepped upon, and which was the proper sort of leaves to bind upon the foot in each particular case If I had arrested their train of thought and asked them the causes of disease, they would have answered in terms of microbes and toxins and anatomical defects for they had been studying such things for a year or two, but in their unguarded moments they reverted to type They might recite the facts they read in books, they listened with attention when I talked about the principles of science, but in their hearts they always knew that the real cause of sickness was sorcery They knew the medicines we used and dished them out in quantities They knew what they were for and quite a bit about their action Sometimes when they got sick they took some of them themselves but not one of them but had his charms at home

* I went out to see a sick child a few weeks ago here in Bourbon County Kentucky While I was treating the child I noticed the mother nursing a baby which was evidently well above a year old I asked her why she did not wean it
'Oh no!' she replied I can't wean him till the sign of the thighs ' It occurred to me that I was back in Africa except that the woman was white

Many of the younger generation—especially those that live in closest contact with the whites—openly disregard the ancient customs and flaunt the old taboos, but they are whistling in the dark and many a generation will have to come and go before the Congolese lose their jungle heritage of fear and superstition

CHAPTER IX

SOME CASE HISTORIES

ONE afternoon, a few months after I came to Wema, I was going over some language work with my native teacher on the front porch of our little tin house when there turned in at our gate a long file of natives, headed by four men carrying a *tepoi* in which an old and withered Congolese half sat and half reclined. From the fact that he was accompanied by such a large retinue, and because he was being carried in a white man's *tepoi*, it was evident that he was a chief of some importance. His bearers deposited the *tepoi* on the ground, close to the steps in front of us, and one of the warriors who was with him stepped forward and spoke in rapid Bokutu.

At that time I was not very apt at understanding even a pure Lonkundo—not that I ever became so—and the Bokutu variation of the tongue sounds very different to untutored ears. I had to get the story second-hand from Efunza. It appeared that the old man had had a hernia for a long time, and about a week before his arrival at the mission it had strangulated. He had called in all the local witch doctors and medicine men, but their efforts had not been effective either in reducing the hernia or in giving him relief, and so he ordered himself brought to the new doctor. They had been four days and nights on the path *through the forest*.

I took a look at the man and saw that he had been quite right in his diagnosis. I turned to the head man and told him that the chief's chances were very poor at best, but that the one hope lay in operating on him immediately. At that,

the old fellow, who until then had simply lain there with his eyes closed, raised himself up on his elbow and glared at me.

"I am a man," he said "I am a man, a he man and a chief, and I have come four days, both day and night, from Ngelewa to have you cure me. Why are you wasting time with words, as if I might back out?"

I called the nurse—it was during the period when I was lucky enough to have some white assistance—and we made all speed to what we called the hospital. We put the so called sterilizer on one open fire and a cooking pot with our instruments in it on another, and prepared to do the necessary

The afternoon had almost gone when the old chief arrived, and by the time we could get our preparations made it was nearly five o'clock. In the meantime heavy rain clouds had been gathering, and we had no sooner put the patient on the table—that big wide board across the trestles—when the storm broke. It was already dark, for darkness comes early in the equatorial forest and the storm had blacked out the usual twilight.

Imagine the scene. An ancient and emaciated African, with a high piled headdress and a strangulated hernia of seven days' duration, lying on a crude board table in an open, nine by twelve shed with a thatched roof and a dirt floor. Packed in around us as closely as they could get were the patient's relatives and retainers and a crowd of curious villagers. The flickering light from a lamp and two lanterns—I had a flashlight but was out of batteries—which were being held by my assistants cast strange shadows on the group of onlookers, making them appear weird and ghostly. The rain was coming down in torrents and the heavy gusts of wind blew spray over everything in the shed and whipped up the dust from the floor.

The stage was set, the cue had been given, and I was the chief actor. I cannot say how it may have seemed to the

others, but for me it was a highly dramatic moment and I shall doubtless live a long time before the memory of it fades

I gave him the spinal anæsthesia and began the operation. The intensity of the storm increased and the lights kept blowing out, leaving us in total darkness for a considerable part of the time. When I cut through the fibrous band that was constricting the hernia, the gangrenous intestine burst. I wished fervently that I was somewhere else. As speedily as I could, however, and in the intervals when the lights could be lit, I continued with the work. I removed the dead portions of the intestine, anchored the open ends of it to the outside, closed the wound and put the man to bed.

I had no hope for his recovery, but he fooled me. After about ten days I re-operated, sewed the two ends of his bowel together, repaired his hernia, and he went on to a fairly rapid and complete recovery. His name was Iyefa, chief of the Ngelewas, an elephant hunter of wide renown, a small man but powerful. He had a reputation for intrepidity and fearlessness where courage is a dime a dozen. He was a tough old bird—he had to be, to have withstood the things that he had undergone—and he went back to his home and, old as he was, began again to lead the hunters after elephants.

2

At Lotumbe we were equipped with a real operating room, but it had been built some years before I came there, and as all things seem to do so very quickly in the Congo, it had fallen into some disrepair. Now and then we had our troubles in it and though I am not complaining about it—it served me well for a number of years—there were times when I wished for more adequacy than it afforded. The building was made of sheet tin nailed to a wooden frame, and the operating room was at one end of it. The

and the rain stopped and the sun began to shine. And the woman got well.

As a general rule Congo mission hospitals are run on a charity basis, but in order to try to prevent a pauperized attitude on the part of the people, we nearly always made a slight charge for medical services. At Lotumbe our prices ran around sixty francs (about two dollars) for major operations; anywhere from five francs up for minor ones, depending on the size and complexity; a course of emetine for amœbic dysentery was one whole franc (three cents) for six injections; and for general medical treatments—enemas, douches, dressing of ulcers and wounds, skin conditions salved, unsettled stomachs pacified, and bound up bowels unbound—all things were treated for a meya, half a franc, a week.

Two dollars may seem ridiculously low for a major operation, and so it is, but in the light of the native's ability to pay it really was quite a sum. It represented practically two months' wages for an able-bodied workman at the wage paid by the companies, and most of those who came to operation were unable to work if they had wanted to or had the opportunity. We arrived at the price of sixty francs because it cost us just about that much for the materials we used and for the two weeks' food supply we furnished them.

To anyone conversant with the cost of surgical supplies it may seem remarkable that we made ends meet with such a small expenditure. But mission station budgets in the depression years were feeble things which seemed, at times, to disappear almost entirely, and so we clutched our pennies with a miser's grip. We used our rubber gloves, as I have said, until they fell apart; I used a spinal anæsthetic that we got from the Belgian army at from eight to ten cents for an average dose; the quality of our gauze and bandages and cotton was scarcely the best, but they served the purpose very well; and if any man can use less catgut than I in an

operation or can tie a bleeder with a shorter piece, I should like to know his name (other Congo missionary doctors are excluded)

We ran a cheap hospital, but when one has to treat an average of more than 50,000 patients a year on less than a thousand dollars, and pay the duty and the freight on everything shipped in, he has to make it cheap. Some years we got a trifle more than that, when it seemed that a bit of new equipment was imperative, and now and then someone would make a gift for some special purpose, such as the dispensary unit that I built at Wema, and all the permanent buildings at Lotumbe. The state allowed us two hundred dollars credit for drugs and as a *medecin agree* I got a personal subsidy of four hundred dollars which of course was not mine at all but was turned in to the mission.

But it was up to us to cut the corners close, and that we did. Our buildings were in disrepair, our stock of medicine was always low, our instruments were old and rusty and woggled at the joints. There had been a water system at Lotumbe, put in at the peak of missionary enthusiasm during the post war years, but by the time that I came there it was entirely out of action and we poured all we used from buckets into pans. I had a half wit boy whom I had picked up, half dead, in the forest, and he was water boy. He throve at it and got so uppity he could scarcely be tolerated, but somehow we bore with him until, just a short time before I left, pneumonia carried him away.

Some day, perhaps, the mission doctor may have lots to spend, but if he does he will miss out on some of the most interesting features of the game.

The patient's friends and relatives did the laundry work. As soon as an operation was over we gathered up the sheets and towels—and the gauze sponges too—and gave them with a piece of soap to those concerned and sent them to

the river Bongembe checked the pieces they took and saw that the sponge count was correct, and he made sure they all came back and were passably clean. Whereupon we put them in the sterilizer and used them again.

We made no charge for the pulling of teeth, and we pulled a lot of them. A good deal has been said at one time or another about the wonderful teeth of primitive peoples but whoever said it could not have been acquainted with our section of the Belgian Congo, for while one sees an occasional fine set, and most of them have remarkably long solid roots, they appear to decay just as fast as those of their more effete brethren in other countries—or faster.

Moreover, the Congo native, in some inexplicable appeal to vanity, is given to filing his front teeth. Some tribes file only the two upper, central incisors, but others file all their front teeth both top and bottom. Whatever one may think of this practice with regard to its beautifying effect, it can not be disputed that it plays havoc with the permanency of the teeth. The native pays dear for the peculiar effect that he attains, and the missionary doctor and his aides are given a lot of practice in extraction.

I am not a very scientific tooth puller but I admit to being one of the strongest and most persistent. Our dental equipment was meagre—as meagre as could be. We had no dental chair, no grinder, no spittoon. We had no cabinet of tools such as dentists are supposed to have. We had three rusty forceps, tried and true. We used no gas or local anæsthetic. We simply set the patient in an ordinary chair or on a bench and had a friend or helper hold his head, and then we got a hold upon the tooth and pulled till something gave way. What could have been simpler?

A lot of times the top broke off or it had rotted off, and then we had somebody hold the patient's hands as well as his head and went after the stumps. Imagination is entirely inadequate to give an idea of the mouths into which

I have looked Too often they were all that mouths ought not to be

It was on a trip upriver on a boat from Lotumbe that I fought and lost my most heroic battle over a tooth. We had just tied up at a village for the night, and the gangplank had scarcely been put down when a strapping black came rushing on board and demanded to see the doctor. It appeared that he had a tooth that was killing him and if I would pull it for him he would be in my debt for ever—or so he said. I got my forceps out of my bag and went ashore with him. The tooth was a lower molar, and apart from having a deep cavity on one side it seemed to be perfectly sound. It had the look of being extremely well anchored, so I had the fellow sit down with his back to a palm tree and clasp his hands around it back of him. With that I got a firm grip on the thing and began to pull. I pulled, twisted, yanked, jerked, and almost went into convulsions, but the tooth refused to budge. Finally, with a supreme effort I loosened, not the tooth, but the man's hold on the tree and swung him practically clear of the ground in a complete semicircle at the end of the forceps. I probably would be there swinging him yet, if at that point the forceps had not broken and put an end to my endeavours.

The end of the story is that the victim picked himself up off the ground grinned a bit ruefully, and declared that he felt much better. He decided, after feeling of his jaw for a while, that he was cured.

3

After I went to Lotumbe I wangled a little subsidy from the state, to get food for our lepers and for other patients who had come long distances and were receiving regular treatments at the dispensary. It didn't amount to much, but a little will go a long way in buying native food in Congo. I bought and distributed a lot of it—cassava, rice,

s, palm nuts, plantains, and bananas; especially cassava, since it is the basis of the Congolese diet. Saturday morning was market-time and the women of three of the lying villages arrived in long lines through the forest, with their heavy baskets on their backs—many with their children on their hips as well—singing as they came. The nearest of these villages was more than five miles away, but yet the women carried in their big baskets produce weighing from forty to eighty pounds or more, in great good humour, in order to be paid the equivalent of eight annies for every fifty pounds of it. Bananas and plantains were slightly higher per pound, but a bunch of bananas, such as one sees in grocery stores here at home, was valued at some twenty cents. Hulled upland rice was less than 10 cents a pound.

Anyone conversant with the amount of labour involved in raising a pound of rice there knows that such a price is pitifully low. The jungle must be cleared—and what a job that is—the seed obtained and planted, and the young shoots protected from the village goats in the day-time and the forest animals at night. The rice-growers often build themselves a temporary shelter at one edge of their tiny fields and keep a fire stirred up all night to scare away wild pigs and antelopes and other game. And when the grain has formed it has to be protected from the birds—a task that calls for constant application. I suppose that if there is a heaven for the birds it probably is a field of rice, and all the countless little feathered folk that live in the African forest cock beady, greedy eyes at every garden of it that a Congo woman plants. The owner of the garden hangs up bundles of sticks attached to strings at intervals throughout the field, and when she jerks a master string—the strings are almost always strips of vine—the sticks all rattle and scare the birds. The grain is gathered by hand and threshed, a handful at a time, in wooden mortars. Finally when it is finished and the chaff

has all been blown away from the flat basket in which it is shaken, the woman puts it in a carrying basket and takes it five miles on her back and sells it for two cents a pound! And she is glad to get that.

It is truly astonishing what an uproar a hundred or so African women can make when they get together at a market, especially when they are surrounded by an equally voluble and much more numerous mob of hospital patients and hospital patients' relatives who are about to have distributed among them a couple of tons of food. With great effort I was able to bear up under the awful clamour and confusion long enough to weigh and buy the produce, but the distribution of it among the rabble I left to Bongembe, whose nerves were much stronger than mine. Vociferation is a major Congo characteristic.

So is agreeableness. If by being agreeable is meant an uncomprehending acquiescence to anything and everything that may be said by a white man. It would have tried the patience of a saint to attempt to get a significant history of an illness out of a Bantu. Very naturally they had no idea of what the doctor wanted to know, so when allowed to tell their own story they gave the most extended and irrelevant replies, and when I tried to elicit the facts by questioning they answered yes to everything, regardless of what it was. It made it only a little less exasperating to know that they were merely being polite and courteous.

The Congo patients were appreciative of what we tried to do for them. They brought me scrawny chickens, rotten eggs, and now and then a duck or goat, and while the value of the presents was not great—all Congo chickens are scrawny and an egg is an egg to a native no matter how ancient—it was the way they had of expressing their thanks. There was no word for "thank you" in the native tongue until the missionary came, and it was difficult to find a manner of coining one. Eventually they settled on the

word that means relative, *eoto*, and so when saying "thank you" to a man in Lonkundo what one literally says is, "You're my relative, indeed."

When I was travelling through the forest, I never came to a village but someone reminded me that I had treated him, and brought me some sort of gift. I was riding along the path one day making all the speed I could, for I was late, when a couple of women yelled at me from an intercepting path. I thought that they were simply greeting me and tore along without a pause. I stopped at the next village some three or four miles farther on to check the medical census, and I had scarcely got set when down the path the two women came flying in pursuit of me. When they had got their breath enough to talk—a Congo woman can talk for an hour on a single breath of air—they said that they had heard that I was passing and had come to the intersection of the paths to meet me and I had passed them by. They had both had pelvic tumours removed and each had brought a chicken as a gift—a thin, white hen and a red-brown rooster. Their operations were evidently successful, for they had run behind me for a full three miles and got to the place almost as soon as I did on my bike.

A Congo doctor may dismiss all fear of lawsuits from his mind. Even if there were courts where he might be tried, no native would ever think of suing him, because to the African mind all disease and death are due to the intervention of some hostile spirit. While they appreciate what the doctor has tried to do for the patient, they believe that he is simply up against too strong a force. "Who may, indeed, prevail against the spirits?" They never hold the doctor responsible for any untoward eventuality, but if he is successful in bringing the patient round he gets the credit, for he has evidently won out against great odds! It really is a most satisfying attitude for one's patients to have.

At Wema once or twice a year, and at Lotumbe nearly every year, I made a trip to the distant forest villages to give *ntonga* and to hold short clinics for the sick of every section. Often the occasion of my going was that some other missionary work was to be done, and I combined the medical job with it. Not infrequently I accompanied some other missionary on such a journey. Sometimes it was possible to stay in a village long enough to give each patient two injections with two days in between; sometimes we returned by the same route that we went and gave a second shot to the patients as we came back. We cut the price on the second dose in order to get the sufferers to take at least two treatments—the Congolese are great on bargains. At times, however, it was possible only to spend one day or part of a day in a series of villages, and while we ran an occasional risk of developing an arsenic-resistant case, we justified the procedure on the basis that the patients thus treated would probably never have another opportunity to get the much desired medicine, unless we happened back that way, and that the results over a period of years were good.

The news of our coming always preceded us, and great crowds would be assembled at the places where we were to stay. In every one of the villages along our way they would importune us to stop and give "the needle," and were offended when we had to refuse.

They were dramatic occasions, these days on which we gave injections of "neo" in key towns of the section. Early in the morning the crowd would begin to assemble, and as soon as it was light the hospital boy who was with me would start taking in the money and writing their names in order in the record book. I have seen hundreds of such crowds that formed around the table where the boy was taking payment for "the needle" which we were soon to give, and not one of them failed to affect me powerfully. There were the lame, the halt,

the blind, the old men and women who were bent and crippled with rheumatism, the babies and young children covered with the loathsome yellow pustules of yaws. There were those who were so weak and ill that they could not walk, and had to be carried on the backs of their relatives or swung in a net or blanket between two friends. There were always many who had the vicious, fulminating destructive ulcers of the tropics. There were numbers of lepers in all stages of the disease. There were the pitiable victims of sleeping sickness. Scarcely a malady that was not represented and all of them paying down their hard earned bits of money, their chickens, ducks, eggs, dried meat and fish, arrows, spears—anything of any value that they had—with the assurance that the needle would cure them.

When the money had been collected and the eggs and fowls and goats and other produce and livestock had been taken care of, we began the business of giving the injections. In this, as in our operating, our technique might not have received the plaudits of a meticulous superintendent of nurses, but it was simple and rapid and in the open clearings in the midst of the African forest it seemed to be adequate and fitting. Our equipment consisted of a table, borrowed from some villager, which we set up in the shade of some big trees, two cooking pots for sterilizing, and the usual armamentarium of syringes and needles and ampoules. We bought the drug in large ampoules and made up a hundred c.c. of solution at a time.

I sat at the table and as their names were called, one after the other, the patients came with extended arms to receive their shots. I had two assistants. One of them applied the tourniquet and swabbed off the arm with alcohol, while the other washed out the syringes in boiling water and kept me supplied with a clean one and a sterile needle for each succeeding case.

Hour after hour I reached for syringes, jabbed, and

injected. It would be difficult to count the number of gallons of neosalvarsan solution I have insinuated into African arms during the course of ten years in the Congo. I think the most I ever did, single-handed, in one day was 247.

Such was *ntonga*, the Congo panacea, the African obsession.

Besides the giving of *gila*, we held, when we had time, a sort of medical clinic where we treated ulcers, dressed wounds, dispensed large quantities of Epsom salts, gave out ointments for innumerable skin conditions, and liniments for aches and pains. We lanced abscesses, removed foreign bodies, cut off tumours, and pulled no end of teeth.

4

There were many interesting problems incident to the practice of medicine in the Congo, and from the very start I had every intention of doing some definite research, but things kept intervening and somehow I never did. I once got as far as starting to gather material for a thesis for a Ph D., and had a subject chosen and the scholastic end of it arranged, but I was too much occupied or thought I was. I could not see the town for the houses—there being so many individual black men clamouring for attention that I could not get to their problems. I never got around to making any constructive studies of their condition, but someone ought to do it. Perhaps I might have if I had not been so lazy, but the problems are still there: the problem of the tsetse fly and the mosquito, the problem of Congo food and the adequacy of their diet; the problem of sterility and infant mortality; the problems of yaws and leprosy and tuberculosis; the problem of the shortness of their span of life.

I always thought, each year, that I would make a study of the herbs and leaves they use for medicines, but each



BAKUTU BOY AND WIFE



MISSION CHILDREN PLAYING THEIR FAVOURITE GAME
OF MATCHING FEET

succeeding year discovered me as ignorant about this as ever. I thought that I would make some observations on their teeth and the prevalence of dental caries, and some upon their muscular reactions and stamina. I actually began some work upon the cause of pyogenic ulcers once, but by the time I got the daily bunch of ulcers cauterized my research time was gone.

CHAPTER X

JUNGLE EDUCATION

THE traveller through the jungle villages of Central Africa often comes on strange markings in the dirt path in front of the houses. What are these peculiar tracings in the dust? Some sign of ancient witchcraft? Some indication of a primitive rite? No, not at all. On close inspection they appear to be outlines of numbers and letters, and if one watches for a time he will see them being made. Some naked black boy will come out from a hut and squat down upon his haunches and with his finger or a stick begin to practise writing in the sandy soil. For in Africa such things as pencils and paper are extremely rare, and even slates are difficult to get. There is lots of room upon the path, however, and that is where most of them start learning how to write and how to figure. Each morning, in hundreds and hundreds of the tiny towns of the forest people, a drum will sound its loud, staccato notes that call the village boys to school, and soon a little group of them have gathered in the half-open hut that is the church, or sometimes simply on the path beside a tree or by the teacher's house, and there they have their sessions.

The drum calls the girls, too, but they do not come. Through some strange backwardness, some basic conservatism, some essential resistance to change, they appear to be held back. I used to think it was the attitude of the men and boys that was responsible, and that may be a factor, but it is a deeper thing than that. I have not figured it all out, but it is hard to get the girls into school—much harder than it is the boys.

The attendance at the village school is subject to a lot of variation. The boys come or not, according as the notion strikes them. The teacher may harangue them for their laxity, but nothing else happens. Whatever parental influence there may be is exercised against their going, as a general rule. Sometimes, indeed often, the teacher himself plays hookey—there is something on his mind; his wife has gone and he must go and get her; or he must mend a hunting net or go fishing; or he may have a headache; or he wants to hunt up a fellow who owes him money and try to collect the debt. And so between the pupils and the teacher, school is quite irregular.

The school equipment is not always what it ought to be. In fact, it never is. The small movable blackboard is grey instead of black and in a state of disrepair. Once every year or so the missionary comes along and gives the thing a coat of blackboard paint. There may be chalk or there may not, according to the teacher's circumspection in its use. He only has about a dozen crayons to last a whole six months. There is a series of charts by which the pupils learn to read by the syllabic method. The youngsters squat before it—squatting is the native way of sitting down—and as the teacher points to the syllables they all repeat aloud: "o(h), a(h), mo, ma, momo, mama," and the like. There may be several broken slates, and in a rare eventuality one that is whole. If there are slates the boys all make a scramble for them—they like the awful grating sounds made by the bits of broken slate they use for pencils. The teacher has a small supply of books stored in a hinged-top wooden box, along with the broken slates and stubs of slate pencils and used-up chalk and bits of this and that. The books are in the native language, printed at the mission printing press—some readers and a picture book or two, some sorry-looking song books, and a Testament.

The native chaps who teach the schools are seldom much

on erudition. They themselves have only barely learned to read and write, but as they teach they learn, and so the thing is retroactive. As a matter of fact, it is common practice to send the young men out—sometimes they are mere boys—partly to supply the need for a teacher in a certain village, and partly to give a practical aspect to the education of the teacher himself. They are lads who learned the rudiments of reading and writing in some such village school as I have talked about, and then went into the mission station for more schooling there. When they had reached a certain class and some proficiency in their studies, they were given practice teaching under the supervision of the missionary and his assistants, and then went out for a session or two to mature their knowledge as teacher in some village school.

Not all out station schools are quite as primitive as those I have just described. Some have been organized by native graduates of the Institut Chretien Congolaise, the advanced school of our mission at Bolenge, and though they are always handicapped by lack of supplies, some of them are doing very creditable work. On various trips I have had the opportunity of seeing a number of these better schools in action.

Nsaka was a hospital boy at Lotumbe before he went to I C C, and when he came back home he would have been well pleased if I had made him chief of staff, but I liked Bometela more than well enough and did not think it fair to him to put the other boy above him, even though he had graduated from the higher school. So Nsaka was given the task of organizing a school at a village on the high Lokolo, near where Ray Eldred drowned while he and Hobgood were attempting to swim the river.

I came by there about a year after Nsaka had first begun his work, and he had quite a flourishing academy. With the help of two assistants he was holding regular—as regular as could be expected—classes for some forty or

fifty boys from the local village and other surrounding villages. They all lived together in huts that they themselves had built, and they were in the process of constructing an ambitious building for a church and school. It looked to me as if they had bitten off more than they were going to chew in the matter of the building, for they were doing it in the characteristic native manner, which is to get the poles and set up the framework of the house and leave it unprotected while the thatch is being made. If native propensities are left to function as they please, that operation takes so long that the poles have almost rotted before the roof is ready to be tied. I say "tied," because the native mats of thatch are tied to the rafter poles with split vines.

I never knew whether Nsaka and his boys ever finished their schoolhouse, but it was well conceived at any rate. It illustrates a quality the natives possess if it can only be developed. It shows that while ambition may lie buried underneath the slothful habits of a hundred generations, it still is there. The Congo native has never needed to be concerned with work. Necessity for labour never irked his days, and there was never anything like competitive endeavour. Of course they vie with each other in hunting and fishing and fighting, and hewing the fastest canoe, but life is never urgent for a Congolese. Ambition has nothing into which to sink its teeth. Time never means a thing to them. If they do not go hunting today, perhaps they will go tomorrow or the next day. What difference does it make? Meat hunger may get them into action, at times, for it is good to have a bellyful of antelope or pig, but no one ever starves to death.

The Congo has not been a place to stimulate the mind to dream great dreams or to envision great events, but it is going to be. When young chaps like Nsaka, on their own, will start to build a building larger than they need, that means a lot.

The schoolboys at Nsaka's village had grown a lot of sugar cane, and I conceived the grand idea of having them make me some syrup. They were delighted to have a chance to make a little cash and very soon had some three buckets full of juice—they cut the cane in lengths, pounded it in mortars, and then squeezed out the juice by wringing the pulp in a sort of hammock made of vines. I had my cook boil it down and I thought it tasted pretty good, but I could not find a thing to put it in except a gallon coal-oil tin. I had the tin washed with soap and water half a dozen times and rinsed as many more, and then put in the syrup. That proved to be a bad mistake. A night or two later, in another village, I had the boy cook pancakes as a sort of celebration and to use the syrup with them, and they were horrible beyond belief. It makes me shudder even now to think of how they tasted. I hope to die before I ever mix cane juice and kerosene again.

I once visited Lomboto's school for Batswa boys, some distance out from Wafania, with Smith when we were on a trip together. Our boat got in at night and all of them had gathered at the beach to welcome us. We heard them singing from far down the river and it was an impressive sound. They had great bunches of bananas and plantains, a lot of ducks and chickens, and several hundred eggs (of which, *mirabile dictu*, some 50 per cent. or more were good).

After gifts had been presented and we had thanked them in a speech, we went with them out to their church where they put on a programme in our honour. I shall never forget their singing. Lomboto had trained them well, and under the stimulus of the occasion they really let themselves go. I sat near the front of the church by a side door, and I could see the starlit sky between the branches of the palms outside and get, now and then, a breath of night air, unsullied by the crowd.

The Batswa are a tribe of semi-pygmy people. They

were, it is believed, the original inhabitants of the territory and were pushed about a lot and practically enslaved by the incoming Bantu. At any rate they are a markedly inferior type of people in physique and intellect and in their standards of living. The Bantu of the section are primitive enough, certainly, but the Batswa are often just a jump ahead of the apes. Not quite as bad as that, really, but they are mighty low in the scale of cultural attainments. It cannot be entirely laid to inherent lack of initiative and intelligence, for they have been browbeaten and downtrodden for so many generations that they have had no chance. I have come into their villages time after time and had them scatter like so many frightened little animals. Often no amount of persuasion or cajolery would bring them out again. I could feel their eyes upon me from the safety of the forest leaves, but not one of them would budge to come and talk to me or let himself be seen.

I remember riding into the Batswa village of Bompoma early one morning. Somebody set up a yell of "Bóndèlè" and they all headed for the trees. But one little naked toddler fell after his mother had already got away. The terror-stricken youngster could not have screamed more frantically if I had been a leopard just about to spring. As soon as they realized who it was, the older ones came back, but in spite of all that I could ever do—and I went through that village many times—they remained as furtive as squirrels.

It was not as if they had been mistreated by the whites, for they were so abject as to call forth the protective instincts of even the most hard-boiled of the traders and government men. It was their natural timidity of spirit. They were not cowards. They were intrepid hunters and would stand in face of danger when men of other tribes would run, yet they were fearful of the strange and the unknown.

But they could sing, and sing they did that night, and

in their singing they bespoke the liberation of their timid, undernourished souls. Their voices rang in the high, half-open native structure and echoed through the squalid village streets—squalid in the daytime but romantic in the night under the light of the stars. Lomboto was a graduate of the Institute, one of the outstanding members of his tribe, and they were proud of him and the boys would do anything he said. He must have told them really to sing that night, for every ounce of energy they had was in it. I should like to hear them once again—that group of sixty naked, runty, forest aborigines, so full of song.

They called on Smith and me, and we said what we could, but Bokenge got up and went across the church. He took Lomboto by the hand and standing that way said, "*Iso baninga* (We are brothers)." That was an action of profound significance, for Bokenge was of a family of chiefs, and the Nkundo never have any dealings with the Batswa except to order them about. But they had been at Bolenge together at the I.C.C., and such was the potency of the influence there that the barriers between the tribes were broken down—even those 'between the Bantu and the Batswa. No, not entirely broken down, but enough so that a fine, upstanding fellow like Bokenge, with pride to spare, could stand up in public and shake a Batswa's hand and call him brother.

I never had an opportunity to make a visit to Mbowina's school, but it had the reputation among the missionaries of being the best outstation school we had. I did not know the school, but I knew Mbowina, and next to old Mboyo at Wema he was as full of energy and new ideas as any native I have known. (Old Mboyo, by the way, was absolutely indefatigable. He had been a soldier with the native troops for many years, and when he got too old for service he came back home to Wema. He lived by himself, and he was always working at something and going at it as if his life depended on it. He was great for such innovations as

the house he built high up on poles, or the deep, wide ditch he dug with prodigious labour all around a field of sugar cane to keep the goats away. The natives figured he had *songwa* ed and he must have been at least half-crazy. When evening came he would sit upon his high front porch and beat his drum and sing—the weird, high pitched, half wailing songs of Africa.)

Mbowina, too, was full of energy, but he was not crazy and he was always formulating some new scheme. When he came back from the I C C and started teaching school out in the Ekonda district he had no slates and so he taught the boys to make their own. They were not really slates but they answered the purpose well enough. They simply split a section of a *boõle* or a *bombambo* tree into thin pieces like a board and let them season for a while, and then they smoothed them off with rough sandpaper like *esese* leaves and wrote on them with an ordinary pencil. When the space was full they washed off the marks or used *esese* leaves again, and began all over. The *bõõle* and *bombambo* woods are very white and smooth and it was really quite a practical invention.

He designed reed pews for his new church building and they were so cheap and satisfactory that when we built the new mud school building at Lotumbe we copied his design for seats.

The natives of the Congo are avid for learning. They want to know all that the white man knows. They want to have everything he has and wear what he wears. Like other members of the human race, they prefer to get their learning easily rather than to work for it, but lots of them will work for it if they have to. And with nearly all of them they have to.

They are slow, as I have said before, in learning things from books and have a lot of difficulty with abstract ideas. Education as we know it is new to them, and it is hard for them to get the hang of it. A hundred generations without

a single book or written word, and then with startling suddenness a European school! Their background never prepared them for it. They will have to have a bit of time to get their bearings. We have a habit of expecting far too much of them. But they are not dumb—they are just different.

They are good at memorizing. Time after time I have seen old men who could not read a word—often they held their books wrong side up—get up and give whole chapters of the Bible. They held the book, of course, to make it seem that they knew how to read. One old *mpaka* (elder) at Lotumbe always made a great to do about his glasses—getting them arranged just so—before he took his book to read, but it was known to everyone, both white and black, that he could not tell one letter from another. He was never at a loss when asked to read Scripture, because he knew so much of it by heart.

The early missionaries tell a tale about one of their number who was on a trip and preached in a certain village in the morning. He had expected to go to the next village the following day, but changed his mind and went the same afternoon. When he came to the second village he was amazed to hear his sermon of that morning being preached for him by one of the natives who had hurried on ahead.

They are very good at getting things by rote and they are very apt at picking up the manual techniques—sawing, planing, sewing by machine. They take to tailoring like ducks to water. They have a knack for it. A lot of them are able with a little practice to make a fairly good copy of a pair of pants without even unripping the seams of the original pair. They were capable of giving medicine, operating, and doing other jobs at the hospital, and the way they could cook was astonishing. Nkolobise, our cook, could make the most delicious pies I ever hope to taste. All my wife had to do to try out a new recipe for

any dish was to translate it into native dialect and give it to him.

They had a hard time with percentage—these chaps from out of the forest—and labour problems and roofing problems made them sweat; they ran into difficulties when they came against the grammatical aspects of their language, which is not to be wondered at, since their grammar had only been formulated in the last forty years; they found it hard, even after they had learned to read, to realize that there was meaning in the words; they could not seem to get the hang of foreign weights and measures, and cubes and circles and rectangles made them dizzy; but when it came to things that were within their natural sphere—things for which they had a background—they were extremely clever.

The Congo natives never saw a nail or screw or piece of wire before the white man came, and even now they rarely use them. Everything is fastened together in the Congo with split strips of the *ngoy* vine which grows in the swamps. The natives cut long sections of this vine—twenty to thirty feet in length—and drag great bundles of them in from the forest. These they cut again into shorter lengths, some ten or twelve feet long, and split them—with a knife if they have one handy, or with their teeth if they do not. Once they have started the split in the end of the vine, which ordinarily is about as large as a man's big toe, they carry it down its length by pulling it apart. Now I have seen white men try to do it time and time again, and I have tried it many times myself, but none of us has ever been able to keep the split accurately in the centre. Invariably we allow it to split off at the side, anywhere from a foot or two to several feet from the beginning. We Europeans simply could not make it run the length of the vine, but any native could do it. They would split it and split it again and split it again until they had about a dozen pieces. They scraped away the soft

close at hand, and others from distant villages where the journey to the mission took them more than a week through the forest or on the river. Some were little boys—seven, eight or nine years old—some were *basekota* (unmarried youths), and some were men with wives and families. A certain number of the boys were taken in as boarding pupils. They lived in a special compound and were cared for by a native man and wife under the supervision of one of the missionaries. These were the so-called “grass boys” of the mission, so named because they spent a lot of time cutting grass. They were the only mowing machines that we had. It was quite a sight to see one of these African lawn mowers in action. The best one that I ever saw was one I had at Wema—a two dozen boy power machine. I had charge of the boys and their work, and there were three groups of little youngsters of eight or nine to a group. I selected a *capita* for each group from among their number, who was supposed to report to me the failure on the part of anyone to put in proper time and any loafing on the job. I say “supposed to,” because sometimes they did and sometimes they did not. It can be imagined what sort of an overseer a ten-year-old Congo native lad makes, in charge of half a dozen other little black ones just a trifle younger. I took an occasional look at them myself. I carried a paddle in the basket on my bike, and when I caught a youngster sitting down I fetched him three smart whacks upon the bottom with the board. That board was oil for the machine. I could not catch them very often, though, for they kept scouts on watch and we played quite a game of hide and seek. When caught they took their paddlings in good humour, and were somewhat more diligent for a little while thereafter.

They cut the grass with sickles, and the leader of the group would line them up, each grass boy with his four- or five-foot strip across the field, and then they would start—three sickle strokes and then a step, three strokes and then



VILLAGE WOMEN TRYING TO SELL FISH TO
STEAMER WORKMEN NEAR WIMA



NATIVE WOMAN IN CHARACTERISTIC COSTUME

She is tending her children and preparing
a mass of caterpillars

a step—all grunting out their breath in unison with every stroke. Four good full hours they put in every day, and they got a penny and a half for wages at the end of the week. They also got their food, a place to sleep and a khaki shirt and pair of khaki pants four times a year. And then they had the opportunity to go to school. We always had to turn great numbers of them down. At Wema I do not think there ever was a day that anywhere from three to ten small boys did not come asking for a chance to work and go to school, and it was hard to have to turn them down. They really wanted education and were willing to do some really hard work to get it. Of course, being human, they did not want to study very hard, and they were just as happy over a holiday as anyone who ever went to school because he had to. But by and large they showed a lot of singleness of purpose, and stuck to it with such a fine persistence that they could scarcely be kicked out.

I remember Paul Njoku. He was a big black, blustering fellow, well along in middle life, and he was loud of mouth and very hot of temper. I doubt if any Congo native ever had more faults than he or tried harder to overcome them. I do not remember where his village was, but he came in to Wema with the fixed idea of making a preacher out of himself.

He put his pride in his pocket and started in the lowest class in school with all the little boys. Year after year he went on with unmatched perseverance, for he could not learn a thing. By sheer tenacity he passed a grade or two and kept on coming in the hope that some day he might learn to read his Bible. Such constancy deserves reward and when and if the pearly gates swing wide I trust they will take Njoku in as one who weak and faltering though he was kept shooting at the mark.

It became necessary in the Lotumbe school to make a ruling that no one could remain in any grade beyond a

certain length of time, because there were so many of the same old men who cluttered up the classes every year. That ruling hurt some feelings, but it eased out a lot of hopeless numskulls.

At all the mission stations the schools were divided into the upper and lower sections, and when the students had completed four successful years of the *École Supérieure* they received certificates of graduation. The exercises they went through were very much the same as those the high-school youngsters have at home. There were no girls in the class and there were seldom any fancy clothes—just plain white drill the village seamsters or the boys themselves had sewed—but they had songs in native dialect and songs in French and plays in both as well. They had a baccalaureate address and marches on and off the stage and all those things delighted them, for Congo folk are great on drama and display. They love to put on plays, and there are mighty few of them who do not have a flair for acting.

Iyome, who with his wife had charge of the girls' compound at Lotumbe, was without question one of the best actors I have ever seen. His monologues were in a class entirely by themselves. When he told the old Lonkundo story of the fingernail and the louse one could almost feel something crawling in one's hair. The boys were apt to bring him in every play they gave because he was so good at changing scenes. He could stand up on the platform of the church and with a few, well-chosen native words create impressions that would have been impossible with props.

"And now," Iyome would say, "we're in the forest and it's getting dark." And though the play was in the church and it was just about as light as day could be, I could have sworn that I could see the trees among the falling shadows. No make up was required for him to change a man into a bird or animal or back again. He simply

brought them forward on the stage, and pointing out the parts he wished to call attention to, he would say.

"Imbongo is a chicken now and here's his comb, and here's his tail and here's his beak. Botuli is an elephant (and here he'd stop and fondle an imaginary trunk) and Longo is a crocodile."

He was good and no mistake, and all of them are good, for they can put themselves into their parts without self-consciousness. And when it comes to mimicry they are simply unequalled. If anyone would like to see himself as others see him, just let him give a native Congolese a week and then get the fellow started aping him.

No white man ever ought to think that he can go out there among these primitives and put on front and make them think he is something other than he is. They have the most amazing perspicacity in reading character, and an uncanny way of finding out the weak spots in the armour of one's personality. All the little oddities a person has are mimicked by them to a fare you well. They never take off a person maliciously, and never to his face, but I have been on hand when some of them were on a tear and they had everybody's little foibles down with such exactitude that I could well imagine what they did to me and my ways when I was out of sight. I often said to the boys when they were going good, "Now show me how I do," but they never would. It would not have been polite, and while the word "politeness" has no native counterpart, they have a well established etiquette and carefully adhere to it.

It was interesting to watch one of these station schools in action. A bunch of boys were always on hand at the *lokole* house waiting for a chance to beat on one of the drums, and when the one who watched the time gave the signal they beat them with a most remarkable enthusiasm. A native can put forth a lot of energy when the notion strikes him, and when several of them get together on as

many *nkole* they really put themselves into it "*Loyaka, tosala Loyaka, tosala Loyaka, tosala,*" reverberated the drums "Come to work Come to work Come to work"

And with a great deal of noise and confusion they came—boys, youths, and men, and now and then a girl The sessions always opened with a song, the reading of Scripture, and a prayer Anyone the leader called on offered prayer, no matter what his age or station, and never hesitated in the slightest Even the little boys could pray with great facility without being disconcerted in the least It did not seem to matter, either, whether they were members of the church—which, really, is the way it ought to be, for prayers preceded churches by some several thousand generations

There never were enough individual classrooms for the classes—not by any means—and since the church was always used for school, there were some twelve to twenty separate classes scattered around in the auditorium And when I speak of auditoriums don't get the wrong impression, for this was the Congo, not New York or London

Some of the teachers were graduates, and some were simply members of a class a little more advanced than that which they were teaching There were no end of altercations Discipline is not a thing to which they are accustomed, and a native will not take orders from another Much of the conversation was carried on in voices meant for the wide open spaces and there were many times when it was not as quiet as it might have been

Jigger and louse inspection was a province of the school The jigger is a sand flea which burrows under the skin of its host and develops young in a sac which at maturity is about as big as the eraser on a lead pencil If left alone the young will hatch, and some will reinfest the same host and others will be scattered in the dust of the paths and floors Once they have got into the skin they itch tremendously and keep it up until removed, but the natives become

so inured to them that frequently they would rather let their feet fill up with them than go to the trouble of picking them out. I have seen some rare feet in the Congo, half eaten off with ulcerated jigger sores. They carried in a chap from Lokokoloko once who had layer on layer of jiggers in his feet—the worst case I have ever seen. Bome tela gave him the title of '*le roi des chiques*' (the king of jiggers), and we had almost to amputate at the ankles to get rid of the parasites.

It was a rule in the mission school that pupils' feet must be free of jiggers, and having a look at feet was a routine job for a teacher. Of course, to say there was a rule is not to say that it was always rigorously in force, but now and then a lad would be sent out to remove the *bampanza* from his toes. A little bit of itch might be accepted as a sort of necessary evil, but when some youngster let it get too far along they sent him to the doctor for a going over. Rebecca got the most of them—Bolumbu Lebeka, the older of the women at the hospital—and it was really quite a sight to see her take a boy in hand and oversee him while he picked his jiggers out and rubbed himself with sulphur ointment.

It was of such backwoods schools and primitive pupils that Newell, my wife, had charge through all the years that she was there. The term backwoods is apt to bring to many minds the thought of pioneer America, but it is doubtful if the early settlers of this country ever saw woods which the description 'back' would fit as well as it fits the Congo, or any people quite so primitive as these that inhabit it. Anyone who teaches there might well be called a pioneer.

The difference lies in this, that just around the corner lies a civilization far more materially advanced than the early Americans ever dreamed about. The pioneer teacher in the Congo has something startling in the way of contrasts to offer her pupils. Small wonder that the boys

whose background is as of a thousand years ago find the conceptions of a modern world a bit confusing.

3

The enterprise that I am proudest of, which has been undertaken by our Congo mission, is the organizing and developing of the I.C.C. (Institut Chrétien Congolaise) which I have already mentioned. I feel that as a doctor in the Congo I have done some good—have done some things that badly needed doing—but as a medical man, when I am gone my influence, too, is gone.

"Oh!" they assured me, and there were tears in their eyes, "we'll never forget you." But even if they do remember me, what then? What I did is gone except for memory, but what I may have taught them will persist and be effective in their children's lives. And so I think that teaching is our most important contribution; and where we have brought the youth into the position of leadership, there we have made our mark. The I.C.C. is such a place and while I never had a chance to be connected with it closely, I take a lot of satisfaction in it.

From those who graduate each year from each of the mission station schools, two or three or four of the most likely ones are chosen to go down-river to the I.C.C. They are selected for their scholarship, their general aptitude, and leadership. It is a great honour for those who are given the coveted opportunity.

"I have been chosen," shouts a young fellow, running and leaping down the path in his excitement, "I have been chosen to go to the I.C.C." And the ring in his voice leaves no doubt as to his eagerness.

They are eager to explore the future which holds for them so much that is new, and of which they have received a foretaste. They want to know all that the white man knows—all that they think we know. They want the

prestige that comes with educational attainments. They want jobs where they may exercise authority, and of course they want money and the things it buys.

For four years they are in close fellowship with native and white teachers, and with their fellow students from various parts of the country. They work together, play together, study together, loaf together, sing and worship together. They are from different regions and from widely separated tribes. It is traditional with them that a man of one tribe never has a close association with one of another tribe, but here there are representatives of many tribes and all live together as one big group. They have found a new allegiance. They have joined a new clan. Even the lowly, often hated Batswa are included. This is of profound significance.

Each student is given a plot on the Institute grounds, where he may raise a garden for his own consumption, and from which he may sell produce for profit. They take their produce to Coquilhatville, some seven miles away, where there is a white population of seven or eight hundred, and sell it from door to door. The government authorities in such a centre as Coquilhatville keep a close check on the natives in order to prevent the development of large idle groups, and they must be able to show, on demand, an authorization to be in town signed by their employer or by the police commissioner.

A year or two ago a number of the boys had been to Coq, as it is commonly called, and were returning home when they were stopped by a couple of native police. They showed their permits one by one and drifted on slowly, waiting till all should have been examined. The last one to show his passport was one of the Batswa boys and the police, considering him fair game, began to heckle him. When they found that he didn't heckle well but gave them back as good as they sent they seized him and were going to take him to jail. He resisted, and they were

about to subdue him in real earnest when the whole group of students descended upon them and demanded that they let their classmate go

It was an unheard of situation the men of other tribes coming to the aid of a Batswa and identifying themselves with him in time of trouble

Almost all of the students who come to the Institute are married Under the influence of the new surroundings and away from the traditional attitudes of their home villages and their conservative relatives, these women have taken up school work, if not with enthusiasm, at least with seriousness When the women of any given civilization begin to change then there is change indeed The women of the world are more conservative than the men, more resistant to change, and hold more strongly to their faith whatever that faith may be

In the village schools the little girls do not come at all At the mission stations there is always a group of boarding girls, the *basemoke* who are made to come, and a lot of pressure is brought to bear upon the wives of the young men who are in school in order to get them in They come sometimes but rarely do they put forth any very earnest effort

Why should we go to school? they say 'It doesn't get us anywhere A woman cannot get a job It's just a waste of time We're going fishing'

But at the I C C they are changing all this They teach the women how to sew—a trade that men have largely pre-empted until the present—and how to prepare new foods in simpler ways and how to care for their babies They have their classes and their little plays and their discussion groups The perpetual *Mpokuseya* (I can't) which used to be their constant comeback when anything different was suggested seems to be disappearing from their speech

Gallantry, politeness sportsmanship, responsibility—these are strange words in the African vocabulary but they

are coming into use. Not from their native tongue, for those ideas are difficult to express in their language, even with the use of many sentences, but they are being taken over from the French. And in such places as the I C C. the words are beginning to have meaning in the lives of the students.

Who ever heard of a native man giving his seat to a woman or allowing his wife to precede him through a door? Did a man ever carry a basket or a baby in the Congo, no matter how heavily burdened the woman might be? No, the Congo is a man's world and the women are his property—extremely troublesome property, at times. Is it within the bounds of possibility that a native man would tip his hat—heads that have been bare for thousands of years now have hats—to a native woman and do it where people could see him?

Such things are scarcely frequent yet but they are being done, and more significant still is the fact that man and wife are coming to realize that marriage may be a pleasant sort of co-operative affair if they will make it so. And what a forward step that is for the Congolese!

Football—that is, soccer—is the coming game for Congo boys, and they are learning the meaning of teamwork and keeping to the rules. They are learning, too, that some things are done and some are not. In other words, it is not uncommon now to see them do the sporting thing. It is a most excellent sign. The boys at the Institute played a lot and developed some very fine teams. It was not any too easy on their feet, since none of them had shoes enough to waste on games, but Congo toes are tough and seldom broken.

The commandant of the native garrison at "Coq" had been quite a prominent player in his day, and he promoted the game among the soldiers. At a celebration that was held in honour of a visit by the Governor-General to Coquilhatville the Institute boys were asked to play the crack

team of the troops They were a trifle overawed but went —barefoot, of course. When play was called the other team came out resplendent in their fancy uniforms and football boots Herbert Smith, who had charge of the mission boys, remarked upon the inequality of the equipment, but nothing was done about it

That was a game that was a game, and our boys had some pretty tender feet from being tramped on by leather boots, but when the game was over the Institute had licked the garrison by 5 to 1! The boots had slowed the other fellows down.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHURCH IN THE CONGO

IT may be that we who know the place and love it see it with a somewhat romantic eye, but we call it Bolenge, the beautiful. Built upon a high bank on the eastern side of the Congo, this typical Central African mission station looks far out across the muddy waters of the mighty stream toward the setting sun. In the late afternoon the breeze blows in from the river, rustling through the branches of the stately palms and dispelling the intense heat of the equatorial day, and as the shadows of the evening lengthen there descends upon the observer a sense of utter quietness and peace.

It is a place where visions may be seen—and I have seen them there. I have dreamed dreams of the development of the dark skinned inhabitants of this country, these primitive dwellers of the jungle—the uninitiated of modern life. Evening after evening I have watched the sun go down in a splendour of cloud effects of breath taking beauty, and as it dropped, a great, red ball of fire, beyond the rim of the far-distant jungle, it painted the wide waters crimson. The colours of the sunset slowly faded—from brilliant red to gold to purple, to grey, and then to black. Darkness—and high in the heavens above the quiet earth a star appeared, a bright star. It was, I thought, the star of hope and promise for this emergent race.

It is here, as an extension of the mission station proper, that the Congo Christian Institute is situated. It is here that those specially selected students of whom I have been speaking come from all over our territory to be trained for

a minor part. He had to be in the limelight and have things his own way, or he would sulk. Egotistical, now enthusiastic, now sullen, it looked as if he would never settle down to anything for any length of time. But in spite of his many faults he was a most likeable chap. He would go to almost any lengths to do a friend a favour, and anything he really set himself to do he did remarkably well. He was an excellent cabinet-maker and was good at mathematics, which is a rare enough attainment in a Congolese. It looks now as if he has at last struck his stride, as a sort of clerk and secretary and all round assistant to one of the government officials in the Basankusu region.

There is Litele, who since his graduation from the I.C.C., has done a most excellent piece of work in organizing and supervising the Sunday schools in our mission area. Everyone, both white and black, was always glad to see Litele. He was a big man and his face seemed somehow to be continually lit up with an inner light even though his skin was black. At any rate, on meeting him one felt his winsomeness. He was better than any other man, in the mission, regardless of colour, in ironing out disputes and misunderstandings and difficulties. And how he loved to sing! His vibrant bass could always be heard in any congregation. A good egg, Litele. His effectiveness and fine spirit were an inspiration to everyone.

There are others—many, many more—the seekers after knowledge who have accepted a new way of life and have their eyes fixed on the future. Not all of them are doing or have done what we might have wished for them. Some have drifted back into the old ways, like one I know whose father died and left him a chieftainship and fifty wives. He thought, when he went back to settle his affairs, that he would only stay a little while, but he is still there. He has slipped into the primitive again. Some have turned aside from the path of service and leadership to follow the lure of money. Some have allowed desire for personal prestige

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It is here, as an extension of the mission station proper, that the Congo Christian Institute is situated. It is here that those specially selected students of whom I have been speaking come from all over our territory to be trained for

leadership. I have often wondered if they, too, watch that star, and if they see in it a mystic significance. And will they follow it, as the wise men of old followed the star of the Bible story, to the feet of Jesus?

I cannot say how much their minds may run to mystic signs but I am sure of this, that there are many of them who have caught the practical vision of advancing their people both economically and spiritually. It has been one of the biggest satisfactions of my association with the missionary work in the Congo to have seen these young chaps as they develop from typical sons of the jungle into mature and responsible and spiritually sensitive men, with a definite grasp of the problems which confront them and with the ability to carry out constructive programmes.

It is not to be understood from such a statement that the way of transition is easy. On the contrary, it is remarkably complex and difficult. These people are jungle-born; their animistic heritage may not be lightly put aside; and powerful forces bind them to their traditional way of life. "Can the leopard change his spots or the Ethiopian his skin?" A native may dress himself in European clothes, and to all appearances he is a different character; but to change him from within—to bring about a fundamental shift in his ideas and ideals and to imbue him with the adequate moral force to follow them—that is a greater matter.

They are facing a hard task, these new young leaders. The lateness of the discovery of this part of Africa and the delay in its development have resulted in an extremely trying situation. Civilization has literally bowled them over with its suddenness. These people who have been hidden away for centuries in the density of their tropical forest are now being subjected violently to the complexities of modern life. They, who have been living as their forefathers lived for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years, are now being brought forcefully into contact with our highly 'mechanized' Western culture. The cannibals'

children—indeed, the cannibals themselves—are piloting steamboats and driving trains and trucks. The black boy who knew no other tool *than the crude axe and the hewing adze* of his father now handles the machinery in a modern woodworking plant.

If Walter Lippmann could say, a few years back, that "whirl is king" when he was referring to the modern mental and moral confusion, what might be said of the effect of the impact of the unsettling and disintegrating forces of the present age upon the wholly untutored and totally unprepared mind of the Central African?

This is a critical time in the struggle between the forces of good and of evil. Still essentially primitive, and comparatively uninfluenced in their beliefs and emotions, possessed of no organized religion or system of philosophy, the Congolese offer a unique opportunity for the spread of Christian teaching—an opportunity and a challenge; for the white man has been responsible for the sweeping away of most of the old economic, social, and moral groundwork of native life, and in common decency he must concern himself with an attempt to put something in its place which is at least as good.

I do not mean that the process is finished, for there are great masses of the population that are as yet relatively unaffected in their social and moral customs; but the rate of demolition is rapid. Each day sees a further disruption of the old order and a greater resulting confusion of ideas. Swept from their moorings by the waves of foreign influence, and buffeted by the winds of the worst that our civilization has to offer, the life-lines must be thrown out quickly or the small, uncertain, spiritual craft of the Congolese will founder in the sea of utter materialism.

And these life-lines, what are they? They are the convictions and enthusiasms of the indigenous leadership of the country. Against the oncoming forces of evil—whisky, gambling, harlotry, commercial vice, graft, complete

money-mindedness—the modern missionary pits the sincere spirituality of the Christian-educated young man.

If the flood of commercialism and entire worldliness is to be stemmed, and the people are to be led out of animism into an enlightened and adequate social and moral life, these young men are the ones who will best be able to do it. The graduates of our own advanced school and the similar schools of the other missions, both Protestant and Catholic, are to my mind the main hope for the future advance of the principles of the Kingdom of God in the Congo. I am convinced that they will acquit themselves well, and will stamp their impress deeply on the life and character of the people with whom they work.

Do not mistake me. They are not finished products. They will be sorely tempted. They will falter often, and often be led astray; but by their sincerity and by their faith they will go on to accomplish a worth-while work for their people and their faith.

There is Itofe; Itofe who styles himself in his letters to us "your very own son." I remember him as he came raw from his forest village of Ilongo Nkindo to enrol as a schoolboy at Wema. Ugly and puny, with filed teeth and prominent tribal markings on his face, he was as ill-favoured a looking lad of eleven or twelve as it is possible to imagine, but he was fired with a tremendous desire for learning. No more persistent questioner ever lived than he. Regardless of what my wife or I happened to be doing, we could never be sure that Itofe would not pop up from somewhere with his perpetual what and why. In the middle of the night we were apt to be awakened by his voice under our window, demanding to know the answer to some problem in his mind. With entire singleness of purpose he finished the school at Wema and the Institute at Bolenge, and then went for two added years to Kimpese, the advanced school for the Presbyterian and Baptist missions. He had a great desire to come to America to continue his studies, and while

he was at Kimpese he wrote to my wife saying, "If I could only go to America where I would have the opportunity for higher learning, I would gladly crawl there on my hands and knees."

When Bill, our first child, was born, there were, as I have said before, no other white people within over a day's travel, and it was Itofe that I called to stay close at hand while I went to amputate the old man's leg at the hospital. For the better part of two hours he never took his eyes off the baby, and every few minutes he would whisper to my wife, "He's breathing, mama" I have confidence that Itofe will be faithful to any trust that is imposed on him.

There is Bongelemba, who came from another mission to enter the first class at the Congo Christian Institute. He made an outstanding record for scholarship and all-round cultural development, and has been on the faculty of the school since his graduation. Quite young, enthusiastic, tactful, with a keen sense of humour and possessed of a great store of native folk tales and proverbs, he makes a fine teacher and leader. He made some clothes for me when I started for home this last time and they saved my life, for my old suits were badly moth-eaten. All he needed—and he supplied a perfect fit—was to have a pair of trousers for a pattern. He had been a tailor for one of the stores in "Coq" before he came to I.C.C., and I must say that he was very good at it.

There is Mpengo, also of the Institute faculty, who as a lad ran away from his family to follow an itinerant evangelist. "It is fitting," he said to his parents in trying to get their permission to go, "that I follow this man and learn more of the strange thing that he is teaching" He has learned much in the years since then, and has caught, as few have caught, the vital spirit of the Christian message.

There is Njoku Jembo—he of the fine capabilities and erratic temperament. He could never bring himself to play

a minor part. He had to be in the limelight and have things his own way, or he would sulk. Egotistical, now enthusiastic, now sullen, it looked as if he would never settle down to anything for any length of time. But in spite of his many faults he was a most likeable chap. He would go to almost any lengths to do a friend a favour, and anything he really set himself to do he did remarkably well. He was an excellent cabinet-maker and was good at mathematics, which is a rare enough attainment in a Congolese. It looks now as if he has at last struck his stride, as a sort of clerk and secretary and all round assistant to one of the government officials in the Basankusu region.

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to prevent them from doing their best work. There have been failures and disappointments and heartaches, but on the whole they have done well—amazingly well considering their background and their handicaps.

For the most part these are all Christian young men. I mean by that not only members of the church, but that they have accepted Jesus as their spiritual leader and are working for the growth of what they conceive to be His Kingdom. And it is a serious matter with them. It really means a lot to most of them, and for the present, at least, the economic and the spiritual are closely bound together.

I want to make especial mention of Bokenge Daniele, who was lately installed as a supervisor of the evangelists and teachers of a large section of the Lotumbe field. I had the privilege of travelling with him on his first trip of inspection.

Perhaps I should say a word about these fields. Congo mission stations are situated at strategic points in large areas whence the work can be carried out as effectively as possible. The area supervised by Lotumbe is approximately the same size as the state of Maryland, and in a thousand or so little jungle villages the native preachers and teachers carry on their labours. Every year, and sometimes more often, some missionary goes through these sections and visits centrally-located places where the workers gather to worship, to be paid, and to have the membership of their churches checked and the collection money taken up.

It was on such a trip that E. B. Smith was inducting Bokenge into his new office, and I went along to hold a series of medical clinics—there being no hospital or dispensary of any sort in that particular section. We went up the Momboyo and Loilaka rivers for a journey of six days by steamer, and then returned overland by a circuitous route, arriving home at the end of two months. The teachers and preachers—who are always referred to as

evangelists—had been sent word to 'forgather at certain villages, and the news spread that medicine and "the needle" would be available. We stayed in each of these villages—about a dozen in all—from four to five days.

I was always glad of a chance to make a river journey on one of our little mission steamers. We were not always quite as lazy as I may have indicated in my earlier description, and Smith was an indefatigable worker, but I managed to get by with a minimum of effort and enjoyed to the full the long days of chuffing along through the beautiful monotony of the jungle. Oh, the restfulness and relaxation of those jungle days aboard a little boat! I came easily under their narcotic spell and would have become an addict had I had the chance. Chuff—chuff—chuff—chuff—forgetfulness—Nepenthes!

At three of the larger villages on our way upriver we stopped for five-day *bikitelo* (gatherings) of the teachers and evangelists of the region. On the first and last days of our stay we gave injections of neosalvarsan, and we held clinics on the other days. In these outlying districts, far from any hospital or doctor, the prevalence of yaws is very great, and with the ideas that the people held regarding "the needle" it was a small wonder that we had great crowds. Everyone who could get together anything like the price took a shot, and a lot of those who didn't have the money wheedled us into giving it to them free.

We met daily with the Christian workers—counting the *mpōji* (offering) they had received during the six months' period or longer, inquiring into the status of the members of each local congregation, paying their salaries—if from fifty cents to a dollar a month can be called a salary—and distributing the necessary school supplies.

The meetings were held in the half-open mud and thatch structures that served as church and school. Most of them were in bad repair, and the motley group of natives who assembled there would hardly give the casual observer an

impression of any great promise. In these groups were many of the early converts of the church, who had but little or no education but who had a great enthusiasm for the spread of the Gospel. Others were mere boys, chosen for their aptitude in teaching the rudimentary three "R's," and sent out to get some practice teaching. Still others were the better-trained young men from the mission schools, some of them graduates of the advanced school at Bolenge.

There were frequent bickerings and petty jealousies and complaints and naive criticisms and childish poutings. We came from a day's contact with them feeling that there was very little of the conquering Army of the Cross about them. But in the evenings when we all came together for a service of song and prayer—then I could not help but feel the power in these newly enlisted Christians. There was within them a basic and fundamental sincerity of spirit. There were no saints among them, but they were desperately in earnest and under conviction of the cause they had espoused.

It goes without saying that they lack much of attaining an adequate understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus—who does not?—but the remarkable thing is not how far they have yet to go but what great progress they have already made. It is not that they are such good Christians, but that they are trying so hard. Out of a great need they have come to Christ, and they are standing like the sinner of old in the temple, beating their breasts and crying out from the depths of their beings, "God be merciful." "It's me," is the African cry, "it's me, oh, Lord. Standin' in the need of prayer."

It was heartening to hear them sing. From their mingled voices out of these humble huts in the heart of the African forest rose an urgency of song rarely heard in fine stone churches. "Oh, to Grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be." "Jesus, keep me near the Cross."

"Just as I am, without one plea" There could be no doubt, as I watched the intensity of feeling on their uplifted faces in the flickering light of the occasional lantern, that they believed what they sang.

Bokenge preached. He was not as smooth and musical a speaker of the native Lonkundo tongue as many of them are, but he had definitely in mind what he wanted to say—which is more than most of them do—and he put it across effectively, illustrating and emphasizing his points by the use of their own proverbs and folk tales. On that trip I heard him preach on the average of once a day, and he rarely repeated himself. He had no reference library, no sermon outlines or preacher's helps, but out of the deep sources of his inner conviction and a thorough knowledge of the New Testament he developed a series of most excellent sermons adapted to the situation in which he found himself.

One gained considerable insight into some of the problems which confront the church in Congo in checking over, as we did, the reports of each village evangelist. From the notebooks in which the records were kept we went over the names of the individual members of the various congregations:

"Imbongo Jean ko la Mbula Mata, waj'okande babuzaki mpoji salanga botoa (John Imbongo and his wife Martha Mbula gave an offering of six francs.)"

"Loanza Petelo ntabuza lolonde waji, Boanda Malia abubaki salang'ife. (Peter Loanza gave no offering but his wife Mary Boanda gave two francs)"

Thus went the list, showing the amounts that had been given for the six or more months' period between visits of the missionaries. The goal that had been set for that particular period just before we came was six francs for a man and his wife (about twenty cents in our money). It seems a very trifling sum to us, but to them it represented a very real accomplishment.

As the names were read out the evangelist gave an account of the conduct of each member of his organization: had he been loyal to the church, had he given his offering, had he committed any acts unfitting of a *Botsweji* (Christian)? There was always a long list of backsliders. So and-so had taken a second wife—and often a third and a fourth. This one had gone to work for a company and had lost interest in the church. That one had completely repudiated his belief and had publicly rubbed his body with redwood powder and oil (*ngola*)—a ceremony that had come to symbolize an absolute return to the old “heathen” way of life.

I know of so many hundreds of cases where the individual earnestly desired to join or to remain steadfast to the church, but the pressure from his friends and relatives was more than he could withstand. Especially from the women! It is a terrible thing in a male world to be laughed at by a woman. A man may bear the insult of a fellow warrior but the taunts and ridicule of the village girls are beyond endurance.

“Ho, ho,” titters Fakala to a group of other young women, “Songolo is no longer a man. He has become a woman. He has become a Christian. Ha, ha. It is a thing for laughter.” And Songolo hears and his heart is bitter, for he may have looked on Fakala as a possible wife. At any rate her laughter and the echoing laughter of the group cuts him like a knife.

How conservative and resistant to change are the women of any society! It is they who give the inherent stability to an order, but they come more slowly to the light than the men. And so it was that we heard so often the tragic expression *aobisa ngola* (he has rubbed himself with redwood powder). *It was the tragedy of having seen a vision and let it go, of having rejected an ideal.*

There were always cases of adultery, of quarrels and separation of husbands and wives, of stealing and fights

and general wickedness. Their sins were many, and many of the people seemed to have fallen entirely from grace; but with all their failures and disaffections there was ample evidence that there was a potent force at work among them. The heaven is working in the meal. The Church of Christ is on the march in the Congo.

It has been extremely interesting to witness, over a number of years, the reaction of these primitive people to the Christian religion, and to reflect upon some of the factors which seem to me to have been important in the problem so far. No one can live among the Bantus of Central Congo without being struck with the fact that they are living under a burden of fear and apprehension. Fear is their constant companion. They are afraid of the dark. Those wavering points of light on the path in the village after nightfall are the glowing brands of the natives—carried not for vision but to bolster up their fortitude. For the soft whispering of the night breeze in the leaves of the forest trees bespeaks for them the spirits of the dead.

They are afraid of the spirits of the water and never a native, paddling his dugout on the river and coming to a whirling eddy in the current, but tosses in a morsel of food for the unseen spectre of the stream. The little creeks which trickled through the density of the underbrush—where the women go to soak their cassava roots which constitute their daily bread—these little creeks are peopled with *bilima*; and where the water gurgles over stones or roots, that is the spirit talking. The women give a portion to the brook for a propitiation, and there are special places where the barren woman goes to cast her offering of supplication in the hope that she may have a child.

They are afraid of their enemies—not of their strength or ability to fight—and of their friends, of their husbands and their wives, their mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law and sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law, for who can say when one of them will become displeased and invoke some

powerful spirit to do them ill? All their diseases come from the effects of some medicine that someone has made to put a curse on them and no one ever dies except by intervention of someone who has wished him harm. In every Congo hut there hangs in little leaf wrapped packages the *bote* (medicine) with which they hope to counteract the effect of the curses of others and all too frequently with which they hope to work others evil.

Other than this belief in spirits and an extensive system of taboos the Congolese have no definite form of religion. They have no organization, no group worship and nothing that resembles a priesthood—unless one wants to liken the ubiquitous witch doctor to a priest—a priest of darkness working with the forces of evil.

Moreover the Congo native has never developed a sense of moral values. The basis of their judgments is always an economic one. If one of them steals it is up to him to repay only if he is caught. If he has taken a life a life is demanded of him—either his own or that of some member of his family or tribe. It is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. If a man has adulterous relations with another man's wife it is not so much a matter of wrongdoing as it is of appropriation of another's property and the affair is usually ended when an adequate cash payment is made.

With the coming of the control by the Belgian government the natives have been compelled to pay an annual poll tax. It is variable in amount according to the section of the country, being higher near big centres like Coquilhatville where commercial labour is in demand and less in the undeveloped back country. Although it is never very large—around twenty five to fifty francs a year—many of the people are forced to do some unwonted labour to collect it. A flat rate of about one half the male tax was charged for each wife that a man happened to have. For a chief who had from twenty five to two hundred and fifty wives that was a tough break so he was apt to farm them out as

wives for younger men until the pay that he demanded was sufficient for their tax. It was to them a perfectly natural thing to do. The moral problem did not exist for them.

These factors in the situation are of both positive and negative value when it comes to the effective presentation of Christianity. That there is no old and established religion already rooted in the lives of the people, and that they are under the compulsion of fear and seeking a way to escape from it, leads them to accept readily this new doctrine which promises them the comfort and assurance of God's love and aid, and the grace and salvation of Jesus. I believe that it would be difficult to overestimate the amount of mental suffering and agony of spirit that have been eliminated by the presence in their hearts of the sense of the peace of God. For them to feel that God loves them, that a goodly Providence reigns in the world, that all is not malignant and spiteful—what a great load of hurt and hopelessness that has lifted from their souls!

"Ah!" said one old chap, "now, since I have come to believe in Jesus and the Christian God, I can lie down and go to sleep without fear!"

The dramatic and symbolic aspects of our religion have a powerful appeal for the Congolese, for they have a very strong natural inclination that way. They take quickly and eagerly to that which is ritualistic and mystical, and if the growth toward goodness and righteousness is slow—well, it is slow with us, of whom more rapid growth might be expected. The native preaches with fervour and prays with unction. Once he has been accepted into the church and been baptized, the worst forest reprobate one ever saw can say a prayer that makes one want to weep. And to exhort they have no need for seminary education. They are naturals at exhortation.

I do not mean by that that they are not sincere. They are just as sincere as the drowning man who seizes on a raft, but just as it is too profound for most of us to grasp, so the

philosophy of Jesus is too deep for them. I think that in many ways the Catholic religion is better adapted for them than the Protestant, because it lays more stress upon the ritual and through the person of the priest offers them a visible and accessible way of escape from the burden of their sin. They need as much of the personal element as they can get.

They accept Jesus with entire sincerity as a way of salvation, and though they may not keep too closely to the straight and narrow path, I think it may truly be said that it is mainly through a lack of understanding, not because they do not try. Many times their failures come because they do not understand the significance of His teaching, and many times because their ancient heritage of evil betrays them. Theirs is a dark background.

It is not to be wondered at that these people—who have never had a moral qualm, whose consciences are always clear so long as they are not caught, whose faults have always been atoned for by the mere matter of payment—have difficulty in being convicted of sin by the standards of the Sermon on the Mount. Men who for generations have taken a life for a life and spilled blood for blood, simply as a matter of fairness and of evening things up—such men have difficulty with the conception that it is wrong to be angry with their brothers. And it is quite a task to convince tribes that have never been closer than a spear point that one must love one's enemies. It is hard to make men realize, who have never known restraint in matters of sex, that they ought not to cast lustful eyes on a woman.

The problem of humility is a bad one for them, for to be humble is so contrary to everything they have ever known. Nothing has ever mattered so much to a Congolese as his *mpiso*—his position, his authority, his prestige. How then shall he accept the teaching that the greatest is he that serves the most?

On the last day of our stay in each of the villages where

we held an *ekitelo*, there was a baptismal service for the new converts who had come in with their respective pastors. The *bakimi* (followers) had attended their local churches for a period of at least six months and had been instructed by their evangelists in special classes dealing with the new religion. Then at *ekitelo* time they were examined by one of the missionaries or by some native elder to see if they, who professed to become followers of Jesus, really had a sound idea of what it was they were to follow. To those who appeared to have grasped some of the spiritual significance of Christ's life and teaching was accorded the privilege of becoming members of the church.

The solemn symbolism of the baptismal service is impressive to me at any time and place, but enacted as it was in these cases against so strange and exotic a background it was a doubly moving spectacle.

The candidates assembled in the early morning and led by the pastor of the village they went in single file through the narrow aisle of the forest to the river, singing as they went. Behind them came the rest of the evangelists, the village Christians, and the curious crowd. As they came to the bank of the stream they lined up in a row facing the water. After the people had all arrived, they sang another song and had a prayer. Then the preacher went along the line, taking the confession of each one.

Olimeza te Yesu ale Bona oa Nzakomba? (Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?)

'Njolimeza, O njimeza (I believe, oh, I believe)

'Ko wowamb'ende ngole bosiko, okawe? (And do you accept Him as your Saviour?)

'Njamba, O Njambamba (I accept, oh! I accept Him, indeed)

The years are passing, but I can still hear the emphatic intensity of their voices as they answered those questions. I can hear the group of Christians as they sang "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins

And echoing back from the jungle walls these words in the Lonkundo dialect, "And sinners washed beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." I can hear the exhortation of the native preacher, telling the candidates of the importance of the step they have taken—the seriousness of it and its joy. They are, he says, starting a new journey, beset with difficulties but with a great reward at the end, and they have with them always the Strong Helper. I can see the river, dark and smooth, flowing silently out of its tunnel of trees, past the tiny beach and into the trees again. I can see the crowd of natives and the line of new-pledged followers of Jesus. I can see them as they went down into the stream, and muddy as the water was I never doubted its cleansing power.

I can remember many such scenes, for I never watched one without strong emotion and I always felt that I had witnessed something significant to human destiny.

We had long days in the forest. We got up early and Bangongo served us a bit of breakfast. Then, having seen that our carriers had their loads arranged and were ready to go, and having taken our leave of the chief and other villagers, we mounted our bicycles and were off into the jungle. It must have been amusing to see me getting a bunch of carriers loaded and away. In making my regular trips out from Lotumbe I used the same carriers all the way, since they were returning to the starting place, but on a journey such as we were making then we changed every day so that they would not be too far from home. So each day it was necessary to get a new crew, and that was not infrequently quite a task. It takes a Congolese a considerable time to make up his mind to do a bit of work, and it was hard to get them into the notion of going on a one-day trip. I called the chief, and he and I used a combination of threats, cajolery, and bribery to get the required number of men to agree. I always looked them up the night before

and made a deal with several more than we would need, because some of them regularly failed to appear

There was invariably a squabble over the loads—to see who should get the lightest ones—and they always complained at the weight, but once they got strung out and going they began to sing forgot their troubles and had a good time. And after I had shouted and threatened and pleaded and used physical force and finally had them lined up and ready to go, I began to forget my troubles, too, and gave myself over to the enjoyment of the jungle

I never failed to be impressed and quieted by it. It put me in a thoughtful mood. It has been said that all the great religions of the world have been born in the deserts and the regions where the wide arched heavens, filled with stars, draw men's souls in awe and wonder, but it seems strange to me that the voice of God has not been heard more than it has in the depths of the jungle. Perhaps the people were too afraid to stop and listen. The voices of the multitudes of spirits to which they tuned their ears spoke so loudly to them that they could not hear the deeper and more profound Voice. But now that their fears are subsiding I think it highly possible that they may catch, and be able to interpret for the rest of us some subtler overtones that we have missed. As their souls expand on being released from the stifling burdens they have borne these primitive people are developing a new and fresh and enthusiastic approach to the Inner Kingdom that is full of possibilities.

In every village where we stayed the night Bokenge held a religious service. At nightfall the half metallic, half booming tones of the wooden drum would call the people to assemble and there would be singing and a short sermon. Sometimes the meetings would be held in the mud hut that served as a church, but most often they were out in the open in the village street. I shall never forget the feel of the soft evening air from the forest as I joined in the singing. I shall never forget old Basele standing in the

moonlight, nor the poetic cadence of his voice as he prayed. He had a gift for oratory, and the soft flowing phrases of his Lonkundo as he addressed his Lord fell smoothly and musically upon the ear.

I remember especially the evening meetings at Bonginji. It was our last stop before returning home to Lotumbe by canoe, and for some reason or other everything seemed to go much better than usual. There was a considerable clearing between two sections of the big village, and the ground sloped away beyond it rather steeply toward the river, so that a wide expanse of sky could be seen to the west. No colours could be more delicate than the pink and silver of the Bonginji twilight, no stars more brilliant than Venus and Jupiter as they sank, one close after the other, into the jungle.

Big crowds came to the services. The singing was enthusiastic, the preaching fervent, and there was an exceptional unity of spirit. It was an auspicious start for Bokenge in making his circuit of the churches. We wished him well. In eight weeks I had come to appreciate him greatly—his earnestness, sincerity, and tact. I could not fail to be confident for the future, with young leaders of his type at work.

If I have spoken mainly of the younger leaders I do not mean, thereby, to minimize the effective service of the older men—the ones who first saw the vision, who broke away from the old life, who stood steadfast in trying times. I do not want to go into detail about a lot of them, but there were many stalwart souls among them—good friends of mine whom I shall always hold in high esteem.

In the black days of the rubber wars, when native hands were being cut off and nailed along the front porch of some official bungalows as a warning to the other natives that they must bring in the amount of rubber demanded of them, there lived a little boy in a forest village about a day's journey from Bolenge. It was in those days, when it

And what a smile that fellow had! He had never filed his teeth, and when he grinned his broad face broke from ear to ear. If there were troubles or disputes or bitterness or quarrels, Mpoku smiled his smile and spoke his counsel in a husky, drawling voice, and things began invariably to quiet down.

The problems which beset the Congo church are legion but none, I think, is any greater than the problem of polygamy. Take a chief who had some twenty-five or thirty wives, most of whom were old, and who desired to join the church and be a Christian. It was hard to say what should be done. Should the church appear to sanction plural marriage and take him in, or should it tell him to cast off his wives, excepting one, and then apply for membership? And if he did the latter, who would be responsible for the wrong done to the wives whom he had put aside? If the wives were young, it did not matter much, for they could get themselves another husband; but if they were old and were put aside, they became outcasts.

That was a question for the church to wrestle with, but when it came to members of the church who had one wife and wanted more—that was a problem which they had to settle for themselves. And anybody who thinks it was an easy one to settle does not know his Congolese. A man in the Congo counts his wealth in wives and goats, and developing a flock of the one or a harem of the other is the only means of building up a fortune. So, just as success is measured in countries like our own in terms of salaries and yachts and money in the bank, the most successful African is he who has the biggest harem. The man with the most wives is the most important chief. It has been so for generation after generation, and the idea is not easily dislodged. As a general rule the young men are not seriously concerned with accumulating Congo riches. They are content to chase around with first one woman and then another, and maybe have a wife or two to do the cooking

for them; but as the exuberance of youth dies down a hit, they begin to look to their position, their prestige. Then it is, if they are able, that they get another wife, and then another, until their standing in the tribe is well assured.

The church, of course, is unable to countenance the taking of a harem by its members, and when a man who is a Christian reaches the age when he would ordinarily begin to look for a second and a third wife, and pressure is brought to bear upon him by his relatives to do so, then he is up against a problem.

The problem of position and authority in the church is a considerable one because, as I have mentioned, those things are all important to the Bantu and I am afraid that it will be a long, long time before retiring dispositions are developed among them. The problem of strict sexual morality is bound to be a major one for the Congo church for many years to come, for even we, who have been conscientious—more or less—in this respect for several thousand years have not solved it, and sex has scarcely any moral implication with the Congolese.

The Congo church has its race problem, too, except that it is not a matter of races but of tribes. At Wema we had to deal with two main tribal divisions of the population—the Bakutu and the Basekentula. The Bakutu were the original Bantu inhabitants of the section, and they had been shoved back a few generations previously by invasions of the other tribe from across the Tshuappa River.

The workmen who lived on the station built their huts on either side of the centre path which led from the missionary compound at the top of the hill down to the river. One side was Bakutu side and the other was Basekentula side. No end of talk and effort was expended year after year trying to do away with this segregation, of the two elements, but to no avail. There were elders in the church from each of the tribes. They would sit down and talk the thing over time and again, and agree that it was wrong and

they should all be brethren and live together like one big family. But in all the time that I was there I never saw a single Bakutu living in a house on the Basekentula side, or vice versa.

The distinction was not quite so sharp at Lotumbe, but there we had Mbole row, and a section of the village where the Bikonda people "sat," and even among the Nkundo themselves the Elinga lived separate from the others and one could hear repeated all the time, "*emi Iyonda* or *emi Bombomba* (I'm an Iyonda or I'm a Bombomba)," according to the section from which they came.

And then, of course, there was the Batswa section of the town. I doubt if any Nazi ever held a Jew in half so much contempt as these Nkundo hold the Batswa. And it is not something that they tried to reason themselves into—it is ingrained. Luckily the Lotumbe area is the only one where the problem is acute—that being the only part of our field where any are found—because it is very troublesome to deal with. I have seen a dirty, greasy old Nkundo hag get up and stalk away from church, her nose in air, because some little Batswa woman sat down in the same seat.

The name itself is used as a reproach, and members of the tribe resent it when it is applied to them. Someone, back in the early days, tried to obviate the tension by coining the name *Ba Samalia* (the Samaritans) to refer to them; and it is used to quite a large extent among the people of the mission. It sounds a little foolish, but it can be used without offending anyone very much.

The church has had its problems and will still have them, but it was stimulating to watch the changes that took place in the few years that I spent there. The native leaders, both young and old, are coming to have a new understanding of the task that lies before them. It used to be the white man's church and the white man's religion and the white man's Christ. Now they are thinking in terms of "our church" and "our religion." They are beginning to realize that the

responsibility for the coming of the Kingdom in the Congo is quite largely their own. They are learning to stand on their own feet. It is a vital and promising shift of attitude. It is as if they had at last crossed over the swamps, with their mud and slippery logs and thorny vines, and were starting up the hill on the other side.

Back in the early days of the mission—and that was not so very long ago, our mission having been established at Bolenge in 1898—the qualifications for native preachers were not exacting. A member of the church who had the desire to preach was tutored in the art for some six months or so, and then sent out to do evangelistic work in some outlying village. Thus the mission grew. Considering the strange interpretations given to the Scriptures in America at the present day, it is not to be wondered at that some of those developed by the early Congo preachers were a bit bizarre. They have a habit, even yet, of conceiving some odd ideas.

There was not one in ten of them that did not call the Wise and Foolish Virgins wives—the bridegroom's foolish wives did thus and so those that were wise did not. One of the Wema preachers had a favourite sermon on the Flood. I wish that I could give it as he gave it, in its entirety. It really was a masterpiece.

"Old Noah," said Njoku Paul, "Old Noah went out every morning and beat on his *lokole*, beat and beat and beat and beat but no one paid him any heed." And what he said about the sending out of the dove was this:

"When the water subsided from the earth, the stench from all the animals and people that had drowned was so bad that Noah kept his windows closed until he sent the crows out and had them clean up all the carrion."

But though these native evangelists had some naive attitudes, they also had a lot of penetration. There were some twice-born men among them, fired with a passion for preaching and full of eloquence. I remember one old chap

who was so full of Christian zeal that he could never quite get back to earth. He had failed to pay his tax one year and lacked the money for it the next. The tax collector was about to come, so old Mpongo wrote to me

"For the love of Jesus Christ our Saviour," pleaded he, 'loan me fifty francs!'

Monsieur Van C—— at the next village, and he loaned me a change of clothes and a blanket and I had a good sleep on his folding camp chair.

Nkolobise was unmarried when' he went with us to Wema, but his grandfather, who had enough wives to spare, had promised to make him a gift of one at his death. We had not been upriver very long before word came of the old man's death, and when I went back to Lotumbe to preside at the birth of a white baby, Sam kept me company to claim his wife.

I had wondered a good bit about what sort of a woman he would get, one who had been the wife of an old man for a number of years, but I did not know very much about Congo marriages then. Nkolobise brought her up one day for me to see, and I was much surprised to find that she was young and very handsome in the Congo way.

Her family objected greatly to her going so far from home, but I brought the weight of my influence to bear upon them and threw in an old alarm clock, which may have turned the trick. At any rate they let her go, although they saw her off, I have no doubt, with some misgivings. Not so much because they would miss her, but because they would miss her husband, and could not get the proper gifts from him so far away.

The marriage turned out very well. It *onga-ed*, as the natives said. The fact that she was far away from her relatives was a tremendous advantage, because the rocks that wreck so many Congo marriages are family interference and family greed. They could not keep inciting her to discontent, as they very often do when they are near enough to visit, nor could they keep demanding pay from him continually and getting him upset. It would have been ideal if every married couple in the Congo could go away and live far apart from their kith and kin. One of the most encouraging features of the life at the I.C.C. was that, rid of their wrangling relatives, the couples there allowed

their natural adaptability to assert itself and got along together amazingly well for Congolese.

Moreover, in the case of Sam and Doluka (Boanda Doluka [Dorcas] was her name) they were more or less isolated among a strange tribe and that brought them closer together. After a while they decided that they wanted a church marriage—I mean by that not a marriage in a church but under church authority—and the ceremony was performed one evening at our house.

My wife was going to marry them. They were standing up in our front room, dressed in their glad clothes, and all the native elders were looking on, when fire broke out in our kitchen. Sam was the first to smell the smoke and rushed out in his wedding suit to throw a bucketful or two of water on the flame. It was soon out, and Newell went on and tied the knot and everyone was happy.

But such felicity was much too good to last, and word began to filter through that all Boanda's relatives were up in arms. Where was the money due them? Did Nkolobise suppose that because he had gone so far away he did not need to pay for his wife? Letters came demanding that he pay up or send the girl home, and attempting to get her to leave him unless he made the payments. Finally they tried the old infallible trick—they wrote that one of her close relatives was very ill and was calling for her. The appeal could not be disregarded. If she did not go, she would be held responsible for the outcome of the illness.

So much for Congo marriage. I have never been able to tell how much affection played a part in the choosing of wives and husbands, but my impression is not much. As youngsters the relationship between the sexes might well be indiscriminate, and as they grow a little older, free. Young men and women often live together openly outside of marriage. It is quite a normal relationship with them and no reproach attaches to it. They are *bansamba*. But as maturity comes on, they are expected to assume respon-

sibility within the tribe, which means the taking of a wife or several wives, and in the case of women, getting married. Moreover, it is not enough to win the favour of a man or woman. A woman is not her own. Neither is a man. They are but fragments of the family.

The relatives of the man who has decided to take a wife wait upon the relatives of the woman he has chosen. They extol the virtues of the would-be bridegroom and intimate that the girl would be lucky to have such a fine fellow for a husband. After a lot of talk the marriage is arranged and the relatives of the man pay a certain number of brass anklets, knives, or other African hardware. When this payment is made the marriage officially begins and the two principals start living together—unless they have already lived together as *bansamba*.

If, after a month or so of married life, things seem to be going very well and both parties appear to be satisfied, the marriage is said to be succeeding and a second payment is made to the woman's relatives. This time it is a substantial amount—more knives and anklets and perhaps a goat or two—and the "passing" of this "money" is celebrated by a feast in which the two families get together. This is a public formality and in a society so primitive that it knows nothing of records it serves to impress the transaction on the minds of all concerned.

If, on the other hand, the newly-weds don't get along well together during the trial period, or if for one reason or another there is dissatisfaction, the marriage is considered a mistake and is called off—the money which has passed being returned. Sometimes a longer period of trial is urged, and pressure is brought to bear by other members of the family in the hope that they may get their difficulties smoothed out. The marriage is considered an affair of the two families; and of the two families alone. Outsiders do not enter in at all.

It may take several trials before a man is satisfied that he

stayed. I suppose that, since I was a white man, they figured I was not susceptible to taboo and would not bring down upon them the wrath of the spirits. At any rate, they indicated that I might stay.

It was a cool, misty morning, and I kept wishing that I had worn a coat or sweater, but the half a dozen women, most of whom had nothing on, seemed not to mind. Two of them were old and they kept mumbling to themselves, but that was the only sound. Now and then a passing breeze rustled through the stiff leaves of the canes which grew on the once-cleared land. At times Bontamba drew her breath in little gasps, but that was all the noise she ever made. It is traditional with native women not to voice their pain.

The baby was born directly. I never offered to interfere, but stood back at the edge of the little bower and watched the two old women practising the obstetrical art as it had been known among the Bantu for generations on end. They made no move to touch the infant until the delivery was complete, both of babe and secondines. Then one of them removed a long, iron hatpin sort of gadget from her hair, one end of which was flattened out and sharpened to make a kind of knife. This end she stropped a little on the palm of her hand and cut the cord—not tying it at all.

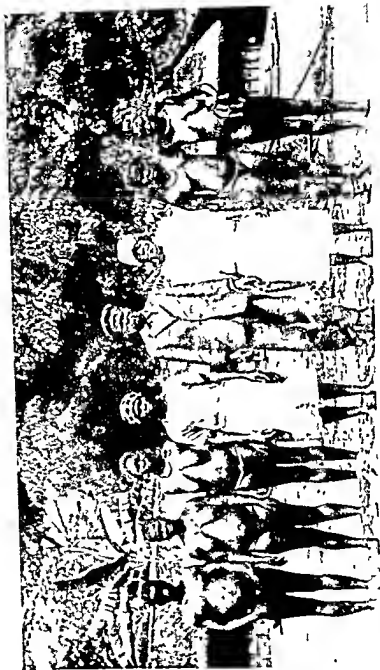
The other old woman took the child and sloshed it off with water from a gourd, regardless of the cold, and then they helped the mother up and all walked into Beuno's house. They stirred up the fire and put a pot of water on to boil. When it began to boil, they took turns dipping short, native handbrooms into the water and bringing the hot rain down with stinging force on to the mother's abdomen. A Congo baby had been born. It was a lusty one—a girl.

As soon as it seemed assured that the baby was strong and vigorous, the father began to gather in a great pile of



CICATRICIAL MARKINGS ON A
BASEKENTUA WOMAN

CHIRI OF WLMA WITH A FEW OF HIS WIVES



wood for a ceremonial fire, which was built in the room with the mother and child on the second or third day after the birth. I never ceased to be amazed that they were able to endure the awful heat in their unventilated huts, but then amazement was not unusual for me during those years I spent in the Congo.

It is strange how well I knew a lot of natives and how quickly I have forgotten their names. When we came to Lotumbe for our second term we had two garden boys—Bangondo and another fellow of some twenty two or three. It was the latter's wife whom I delivered with forceps, and the husband sat beside her and gave the anæsthetic when the thing was done, taboo or no taboo. She did not go to the forest either, but stayed in their own new little hut. It was fortunate that everything turned out all right, because he would have come in for a lot of unpleasantness from his wife's relatives and from people in general if there had been any untoward results.

In a society as primitive as that of the Central Africans whom I knew, childbirth constituted a considerable hazard. The local midwives were not really midwives at all, and they knew nothing beyond the concoction of herbs and the invocation of the spirits. They were sympathetic and kindly disposed, but in the face of any complication they were entirely helpless. Their taboos being as they were, they hesitated to call in a male as a doctor, and even though they would come to me for anything else, they often let their obstetrical cases go too long for intervention to do any good, before they would bring them to the hospital.

One often hears about the easy time the more uncultured people have in bearing children, but I have not found it so. A trifle easier time, perhaps, than Europeans have, if averages are counted, but having babies is no joke in any place that I have ever been. It's a tough business at best; our cockeyed physiology makes it so. And when it

the woman's relatives demanded, and when the infants failed to thrive he packed them up with their mother and sent them by canoe to the hospital at Lotumbe. My wife and Bolisomi, who was in charge of the hospital, did their best, but the twins both died and of course the chief came in for a lot of *bonyoko* (criticism, vilification, persecution) from his wife's connections. They held that he had broken taboo and was responsible for the death of the babies.

About a mile or more on either side of a village where twins have been born the paths are bung with the split fronds of a certain type of palm. These fronds are stretched directly across the path, just high enough so that a person passing along will have his head and shoulders scraped with the leaves. Once I asked the boys with me what the significance of these branches was, but all they would say was that it meant that twins had been born in the town. Perhaps they themselves were unaware of its meaning. Perhaps they only knew that it was done.

Even the woman who has had one child has a long list of taboos especially for her. A nursing mother may not eat of this or that. She may not do a certain type of work. The same is true of her before her child is born. A pregnant woman may not wail for the dead. A pregnant woman may not walk across a field of corn or rice or any other product raised for food, and she may not assume the care of goats or chickens—officially, at least.

And if in bearing children the women of Congo face a desperate hazard—not that they themselves think of it that way at all—the children that they bear face still a greater one. Still-births were common, partly as a result of inter-current disease such as yaws and syphilis and general sepsis, and partly because of the heavy work the mothers have to do. The attending women knew nothing of effective resuscitation, and it was their custom to let the newborn infant lie uncovered on a mat upon the ground until the cord was

cut, regardless of the weather, and then slosh it with cool water from a gourd.

They had no idea of what to do for an ailing baby. Instead of putting it to bed and allowing nature to work a cure, they kept jostling it about for fear that it might not wake up, and they insisted on adding insult to upset stomachs by worrying the child into frequent nursings.

The little ones were fat and chubby and had marvellous, velvety skins when they were on the breast and healthy. But conditions were unhygienic; contact with infection of all sorts was continuous; and the change from their mothers' milk to the heavy, highly peppered, adult food was abrupt. Therefore the mortality among them was unbelievably high. Day after day natives brought them to the dispensary. Their mothers and fathers would hold them out to me with utter misery in their eyes.

"*Ale la nhangé môngo*," they would say. "*Otokambya. Otokambya.* (It is very sick. Help us. Help us.)"

Some were in a condition where they could be helped; many were too far gone for us to do them any good. I very rarely was able to leave the hospital without having had to shake my head and turn away from some sick child:

"*Bomoto* (mother), if you had brought it here a week ago—two days ago—we might have saved it. Now it is too late."

"I didn't know, white man, I didn't know. And when I started it took me three days to get here."

Stark tragedy in the jungle.

It was enlightening to question the women who came to the hospital:

"How many children have you had?"

"Two." "Five." "Seven." "Ten." Whatever number they had had.

"And how many of them are living now?"

"None." "One." "Four." "Five."

Always there was a marked discrepancy between the number born and that surviving. It is very difficult to estimate, but on a guess I would say that the mortality among the children up to three years old was anywhere from 50 to 80 per cent.

Among the Bakutu, it is the custom to bury the child of a mother who has died in giving birth to it in the grave with its mother. It seems a gruesome thing to do, but it is undoubtedly humane, for they believe that if another nursing mother should attempt to feed the orphan, her own child would die. And while the natives raise a good many goats, not one of them could ever be induced to so much as taste a drop of goat's milk or feed it to his children. Miss Alumbaugh, the nurse at Wema, and I argued for hours with the father and the other relatives of such a child, to let us take it and raise it rather than have them bury it alive with the mother who had just died, but they took it away. It was their custom.

The name of every newborn Congo baby is Ndumba. That is just a temporary cognomen, which means in essence "nameless." It will not be given a permanent name until it reaches several months of age, or until it seems pretty definite that it is strong and healthy enough to win through to childhood. If they were to name it at once, that would be offending the spirits by taking too much for granted. A native will never admit to feeling well, lest the phantoms think he is getting a bit too gay and take him down a notch.

"*Mmek'usisi*," was as far they would ever go. "I'm trying just a little." Day after day I've gone from mat to mat and bed to bed among the cases at the hospital and that was my reply.

"Well, how are you feeling today?"

"*Mmek'usisi*."

"Ah! I see your wound is healing nicely."

"*Mmek'isisi.*"

~ And on the path, in meeting natives in apparently the best of health.

"Are you there, all right?"

~ "*Mmek'isisi!*"

I was reminded of old Uncle Bob at Bedford Springs, Virginia, whose unfailing remark, whenever he was asked how he was feeling, was: "Porely, porely, thank God."

And so all little babies are "*Ndumba.*" The spirits can't get sore at that and if by any chance they should and cause the child to die, at least a name has not been wasted nor had attached to it an evil omen.

Right after birth the relatives might call the infant after some important personage just to honour him. The spirits don't seem to mind that very much. I have had a thousand youngsters named for me—*Inonga*—but that was just a stunt to wangle something out of me, for when some Congo mother held her squirming, chocolate progeny for me to see and said, "*Onko Inonga* (This one's *Inonga*)," I was supposed to give her something.

There was a lot about the way they picked the time for naming that went over my head, but after they had passed by several months successfully they went ahead and gave them real names. Many names were handed down from times long past and did not seem to have a meaning; others were the names of animals or names of trades, and now and then they hung one on a poor defenceless babe like "*Ekuk'ea inpo* (the door of the rat)." Twins were always called *Bokecu* and *Mboyu*, never any other names.

Before the white man came one name was all a person needed, and if a situation called for further identification they added the name of his mother. But now they think they have to have a so called Christian name as well, and each one chooses for himself the one he wants. The boys in school who studied French assumed the most high sound-

ing names they came across and signed themselves, with flourishes, "Monsieur Chevalier," "Monsieur Deschamps," and so on.

With the advent of their first child a couple are no longer called by their given names, but thereafter are always referred to as the father and the mother of whatever name they give the child. Thus at first they are Is'ea Ndumba and Nyang'ea Ndumba (the father and mother of Ndumba). Later, when it is named Bompanza, for example, they are Is'ompanza and Nyang'ompanza.

Newell's native name was Bakando and mine Inonga, until Bill, Jr., was born, and then we became Nyang'ea Boya and Is'ea Boya. Bill was the first white baby to be born in all the region around Wema, and the natives had quite a time deciding on a name for him. They finally decided on Boya, which means "grace" in Lonkundo. The natives all felt it was their very special prerogative to give the children of the whites their native names, but when our second son was born we encroached on their privilege and called him Nkolobise after Sam.

The Congolese are indulgent parents when their children are small. The mothers never wean their infants until they are two or three years old, and they are allowed to nurse as often as they wish. I cannot remember ever having seen a native whip a child. I suppose they must have some sort of ambition for their sons and daughters, but whatever it is, they apparently figure that the youngsters can gain it for themselves. They let them grow up for the first six or seven years with almost no correction and no formal instruction. It is either a supreme pedagogy or a supreme indifference. There is certainly no attempt to break the children's will.

Every village street is cluttered, morning and evening, with little naked brown forms in scattered groups or by themselves—blithe, animated little creatures who have the whole of the clearing for their playground, with never a

—with cicaticial markings, but my observation has been that the cuts applied in the African beauty parlours are not so very painful and the results are, in a good percentage of cases, artistic after a fashion and not disfiguring. They really get some very remarkable designs, and many of them would, I think, merit attention as examples of geometric art.

But youth and beauty are but transient attributes in Africa. Age comes on rapidly. A woman is getting on at twenty-five, is middle-aged at thirty, and old at forty. At fifty she is apt to be a hag, a crone, a withered bag of bones. The voices of a group of native girls or young women are soft and musical, their laughter titillating, gay. But life defeats them. The old ones bear the weight and bitterness of years. Their harsh, unpleasant laughter is like poison in the atmosphere—a mirthless sound, expressive of their nastiness of mind and shrivelled meagreness of soul.

“Hal” ejaculated one old scrawny sister whom I overheard, “*Ntufya nsot* (I spit).”

And spit she did, and I would swear that where it hit it scorched the ground.

No other sound in all the catalogue of sounds was ever half so harsh, corrosive, bitter, acrimonious, and shrill as that emitted by irate, excited, female Congolese. They had the gift of utter horridness of speech. I cringe a bit as I remember all the blistering invective I have heard in forest villages.

Age comes early to primitive women; and their bodies shrink and wrinkle up. And all the joy and verve and zest for life goes out of them. Their spirits, through no fault of theirs, have only known the pleasures of the flesh, and those are transient joys. When once the beauty and the vigour of their youth is gone, they have no cultural reserve on which to call for inward satisfaction. Their wrinkled skins and sagging flesh encase a wrinkled, sagging soul.

3

With the coming of the white man, the Congolese had their first introduction to clothing other than breechclouts and bustles, but under the stimulus of brightly coloured trade goods, and as a result of missionary and governmental influence, they have come to accept European dress as a model. It is a great pity. I hold no brief for nakedness—especially as regards the old and fat—but it seems to me to be distinctly silly for them to take over the bizarre and ridiculous styles that we so frequently affect. But human nature being as it is, I reckon nothing short of absolute annihilation could stop the natives from copying our modes in suits and hats, in dresses and in shoes. I will admit that the widespread sale of canvas tennis shoes with rubber soles has been a boon in lessening the incidence of hook worm infestation, but for the most part I have never felt that they should wear our kind of clothes.

At that, they take a lot of liberties with our ideas about propriety in dress. Imagine Lombo, an enormous, tar black, African male arriving at the Wema church in an out of date lace frock without a petticoat, or his wife in hat and high heeled shoes of the style of 1921! Weteto, also very black, though not so big, attended all important functions at Lotumbe in a long black gown with train, and wore upon his durable and kinky head an old fashioned calico sun bonnet. He was a sight to look upon. Ancient cut aways, Prince Alberts, tuxedos, and overcoats were worn with plenty of pomp and pride to spare, no matter what the rest of the attire might be. One old Boangi chief paid all official calls dressed in disintegrating cutaway, white helmet, breechcloth and high ill fitting cloth topped shoes. I can see today his skinny shanks extruding from those shoes and being lost behind his coat tails.

Garters, of course, were often worn outside the trousers—otherwise they would not show. And sun helmets—heads

as impervious to sun as a photographer's dark room felt the urgent necessity of wearing such protective gear. A lot of village chiefs kept helmets as a sort of evidence of rank, and they would frequently appear to greet me in breech clout and helmet and nothing else.

The women of the Congo started off with more originality than the men. In our section they simply took a long straight piece of cloth and wound it around them for a skirt fastening it by merely tucking it in—an expedient which necessitated further readjustments. In later years when a native belle wanted to be very snooty she used two sections of cloth winding the first piece around her one way and the second one the other. For an upper garment they used a straight short sleeved short waisted slip on sort of shirt or another length of cloth as a cape. That type of garment suited them very well and with bright kerchiefs on their heads they made a pleasing picture, but they are not satisfied. More and more they are affecting European styles and most of them look ridiculous in them.

Immodesty is very common in the Congolese, but I am quite convinced that it does not result from lack of clothes. There has been a lot of pressure brought to bear upon them though in this regard and they have often come to be decided prudes. The natives who live at older mission stations' become conditioned to their clothes and are genuinely shocked when they come in contact with upriver tribes who wear none at all. The elders of the Bolenge church not one of whom but had spent a big proportion of his life in nakedness made a ruling one time that any man who came to church with a single button on his trouser fly exposed should be fined for indecent exposure. That was the height of something or other.

4

Birth is an ordeal for the Congolese, accepted with whatever fortitude they may be able to assume, but death is baffling. It is a mystery for us; it is more of one for them. I remember when Mpeci's mother died at Wema. He was a Bosekentula man who had been trained as a carpenter in the mission shop, and his mother was quite a character. Ordinarily a Congo woman is just another woman, unless some special circumstance throws her into the foreground and gives her importance, but now and then one of them comes into prominence as the result of the force of her personality. Mpeci's mother was such a one.

She was much sought after, by the members of her tribe from her own and distant villages alike, for advice on widely varied subjects. She was an African soothsayer and her reputation was very wide. When the mission was established at Wema, she was among the first to listen to the preaching, and became an early convert. Her influence as a Christian follower was great even as it had been before, and almost any day would find her squatting in front of her house, working at the Congo woman's daily tasks and holding forth to a group of interested listeners. I did not know her personally very well. I was not able to understand her, partly because of my inadequate grasp of the language and partly because of her peculiar pronunciation of it, but when she became ill Mpeci called me to see her.

I could get no coherent history from her at all and had the feeling that she did not want me around. I could not tell what was the matter with her, but she insisted that she was going to die. While I was in the hut examining her a local witch doctor sat huddled in one corner, and I had seen another outside. They were, I was sure, the doctors of her choice.

None of us helped her much, however, for in about three

days she died. It was the middle of the night. Someone came and called me—just why I do not know—and I went down. A wilder scene could scarcely be imagined. There must have been five hundred people there and they were outdoing themselves in their mourning—wailing, shrieking, tearing their hair, grovelling on the ground, picking up handfuls of dust and throwing it on themselves. Many had already rubbed themselves with wet white clay, and they were ghastly in the light of the big fire that they had built in front of the hut.

I went inside the hut. It was crowded with natives milling around like excited cattle in a box car. They were rapidly working themselves up into a hysterical state. I elbowed my way up to the body of the old woman where it lay on a mat. I made sure that she was dead and went back into the open. I stood a short distance away looking at the amazing demonstration. It was not grief they showed but fear. It was a beautiful night, with a light breeze from the forest and the stars bright overhead, but it was being made hideous by ignorant humanity.

Mpeci, who was an elder in the church, had gone off the deep end. He was in the grip of an instinctive emotion more powerful than his will; he was in the clutch of the primitive. He was coated from head to foot in clay and ashes, and with a leaf wrapped package of *bote* in one hand he kept shouting and gesticulating. Every now and then he would fling himself to the ground and wallow in the dust.

It was a pathetic sight. The spirits were abroad, and in their confused and violent manner the people were attempting to absolve themselves from something, they knew not what. I sat down on a log and watched them for a while. Efunza, good old Filipo, came and sat beside me. He was not a highly educated man—a few years in the mission schools was all that he had ever had—but he was wise.

"It would be useless," he said to me, "to remonstrate with them now. They do not understand."

"*Ibwa wete joi ja nkakamwa* (Death is a strange thing)," I said.

"Yes," he replied after a pause. "I feel it so."

I got up and went home, but the Congo wake continued through the night. The next day they carried the body out and buried it in a shallow grave and sang Christian songs and had a Christian service over the remains.

I was at Bekih a few days after the old chief of Bombomba had died, and I was sitting in the shade at the edge of the clearing writing a report one evening when the old chief's wives came in from the forest. I could see down the path for some little distance, and the big group of women came along the way laughing and talking and having a gay time. But as they reached the place where they thought they could be seen from the village, one by one they gave over laughing and began to wail and sob in a most realistic fashion.

Two schoolboys came to me once at Wema, and asked to be excused for several days as their father had died and they were being called home to take part in the mourning.

"Well," I asked them, "how long will you be gone?"

"Oh, we'll just go and cry and cry and cry and then come right back."

Grief must be shown, or else it might be thought by watching men that he who failed to express his sorrow violently was responsible for the individual's demise. Moreover, the spirits had their eyes on everyone and they were not so easily fooled as the people were.

I tried my best to keep down wailing in the hospital compound, because of its effect upon the other patients, but I can't say that I succeeded very well. If I suspected that someone was going to die, I went around and tried my white man's magic on the relatives.

"If you make a lot of *commotion*," I told them, "you're apt to be responsible for *others' deaths*."

That had a tendency to hold them for a while, but even

their respect for my authority was not enough to keep their old, instinctive dread in check. There would have been lots more of it if it hadn't been for the fact that Congo natives must go home to die. I do not know what the underlying reason for it is—perhaps the spirits are more propitious there and friendly; perhaps they think their own souls might get lost away from home and wonder through the upper air unhappy and forlorn—but whatever it is, they are under a powerful compulsion to get to their own village whenever they are mortally ill. How many times have I watched them hurrying away into the forest or down to their waiting canoes—the patient jouncing up and down, slung from a carrying pole between two men, or sometimes with his last remaining modicum of strength clinging to the back of his wife or a friend. *It is a race with death; not to beat death, but just to beat him to a certain place, to be about in the old familiar spot when death arrives.*

And they must have their old, familiar doctors round them, too. They would come to me for operations and for neosalvarsan—for medicine for this and that and to have their wounds sewed up—but when they felt that life was ebbing out, I was forgotten. They had to have a doctor who could exorcize the spirits then, and so they called old Fuss and Feathers Knucklebones. He did their bodies mighty little good, but he could calm their souls.

They hung their charms and drank their heathen medicine—the weird concoctions they have drunk since Adam was a little boy. I knew that my medical assistants took their own peculiar kind of dope even while they worked for me. I saw their *bote* hanging in their houses and I heard them talking when they thought I was away.

The head hospital boy in our mission hospital at Bolenge, who had been in that position for years and was considered to be one of the best-trained and keenest medical boys in the country, took sick a few years back. After being treated by our mission doctor for a while, he was carried

away in the night by his friends to be treated in the age old native way. Why not? I could not blame them very much, for when I thought that I was going to lose my child, it was to prayer I turned as much as therapeutics.

I take it that the Congolese are never quite prepared for death. At least they act that way. They try to stave it off. When one of them is very ill and it is thought that he is just about to die, his relatives are called and crowd into his tiny hut. Some one of them will crouch behind him and support his body so that he can sit up. They call to him and talk to him; they try to rouse him if he sleeps; they shake him and they throw cold water on his face and chest. A lot of them that might survive are shoved into the great beyond by such manipulations. We had a youngster at Lotumbé, once, who had lobar pneumonia and had it bad. The boys and I had given him the best of our attention. Along toward midnight of the night I thought that he would reach the crisis, I went to see how he was getting on. His relatives had come. He had been too sick to respond to them and they had taken things in hand. They had taken him out of bed and put him on the floor, without a blanket or a stitch of clothing. Some woman was supporting him and they were dousing him from time to time with water from a gourd. It made me pretty bitter, but for once I held my tongue.

It seems to me a hard way to die and I have tried to argue with them that they ought to let the patient be—to pass away in peace—but I suppose that even the dying ones themselves are happier in their last moments of consciousness than they would be if left alone. It is their way.

The native grief is not all demonstration—some of it is very real. Perhaps more of it is actual and sincere than we are apt to think. Perhaps the exhibitionism was just the effervescent part of it which hid the real thing underneath. They once brought an old Bonkanza notable to us, who had fallen from a palm tree and suffered what appeared to us

to be a fracture of the spine. Two of his sons had brought him in, accompanied by three of his wives. No one could have been more solicitous than these three women were for this old man, and when he died a few days later there was no doubt about their sorrow. They sat before the mat on which he lay, their arms around each other, utterly dejected and sad. One of the sons, a lad of seventeen or so, lay on the heap of ashes where the fire had been, his body shaking with sobs.

I remember old Bomanga when his brother died. He simply stood there leaning on his spear, watching while they wrapped the corpse in mats, and every now and then a tear would trickle down his wrinkled cheek and lose itself in his sparse, moth-eaten beard. The two of them had come a long way for treatment, accompanied only by a boy of ten or twelve. This beaming youngster waited on the two old men with a most remarkable devotion—cooking for them, bringing their water, sweeping out their hut, and answering their every call—but on the day the brother died he ran away. We never saw him again.

I rarely went to the burying ground, but this time I did. Bongembe, the sentry, got two men to carry the body and we went along. No great procession this, just the men with the corpse, wrapped in its mats, Bomanga, Bongembe, and I. The hospital crippled squad had dug the grave, and when the carriers had lain the dead man in it, Bomanga spoke to him.

"Good-bye," he said, and that was all.

Years ago they used to kill a lot of slaves and wives whenever any man of great importance died, and even as late as our years there reports came in of occasional instances of this practice. One year the various classes of the upper school at Lotumbe put on some stunts in honour of the visit of some state officials, and one of the things they did was to give a pantomime of an Ekonda execution. They are awfully good at things like that, and looking

at it from a little distance I could almost believe that it was real.

They led the trembling slaves close to the grave and fastened them to the ground with forked sticks. Then one of them was placed upon a sort of legless chair with a reclining back and lashed fast with vines. A few yards away a tall, springy pole had been set in the ground, and from the top of it was suspended a sort of wicker cage. The pole was bent down and the cage fastened to the head of the slave in the chair. At that the executioner appeared upon the scene and after dancing around the victim and feinting many times, he uttered a terrible yell and severed the head from the body at a single blow. Blood spurted everywhere and the victim's head went hurtling through the air. It did not matter that the blood was berry juice and the head a papaya, it was horrible enough.

CHAPTER XIII

WITCH DOCTORS AND CONGO CUSTOMS

I MENTIONED, once before, that I had never gone to see a Congo native who was ill at home with any serious sickness without perceiving in the offing some competitor of mine—some jungle doctor of the ancient school, a Sir Jeremiah Warlock Knucklebones, W.D.* These fellows were important members of the village life because they knew—or were supposed to know—the secrets of the plants and their medicinal values—emetics, styptics, poisons. They knew the charms and sold insurance in the form of charms. If paid enough they would bring a rain in time of drought, and they could pick out the guilty one if any crime had been committed or if someone had died in a suspicious manner. Some witch doctors had the power to see into the future.

I hesitate to say a lot about these jungle colleagues of mine. I really did not know them very well, although I tried to win their confidence. They were stand-offish and secretive. I saw a lot of their results, and to my mind most were bad, but perhaps I was biased. Professional jealousy, no doubt. I came upon Insenge one day while he was showing the rest of the hospital boys a charm he had just acquired for potency. He did not seem very disturbed to have me know that he went elsewhere for his medical advice. And if I was somewhat jealous of the witch doctors, they were many times more so of me, and if I looked at them askance because of their unscientific attitudes, they looked at me with hatred, for the white man was undoing

* Witch Doctor.

their power. They worked in darkness and with fear, and light was coming to the jungle. Theirs was a dying art; not dead, but dying.

My forest confrères would have none of me. Most of the natives were nearly always ready for a little chat—in fact, their chatting frequently became a bore—but not the medicine men. They would not talk at all. I came across old Bokambanza on one of my trips and tried to get him to tell my future, but he would not. Bometela, Iloko, and I had just ridden into Bompoma and I was about to call the people for examination when Bometela came riding back from the far end of the village at great speed.

"Bokambanza, the great diviner is here," he said to me, "and I thought you would like to see him."

I was very anxious to and followed Bometela down the street. This Bokambanza had a widespread reputation for foretelling coming events and for pointing out the person guilty of a crime. He came of a long line of witch doctors who had specialized in divination. There are specialists in the Congo, mind you.

I greeted him with due regard for his rank and reputation, and passed the time of day. Then I said to him that I had heard of his great powers and was desirous of knowing what the future held in store for me. As long as we were talking other things he carried on the conversation, but when I switched to his specialty he closed up tighter than a clam. I tried to get him in several different ways but didn't have a chance. He wasn't talking.

I have read about some white folk being taken into the natives' confidence, and learning all the inner secrets of the African on a six months' trip. The natives welcomed them with open arms—so these authors say—and put them through initiation rites and made them life-long members of their secret orders. It may be so, but I am sceptical about it. I knew a sociologist who claimed that he could get from natives in an hour or two the kind of information that the

missionary never got. He had some special witchcraft of his own, perhaps. I am doubtful, but he may be right. My own experience has been that the natives themselves do not know the answers to a lot of things we ask them, and when they do, if their spiritual conceptions are concerned, they keep them quite well hidden. They are a polite people, and if you insist on an answer the one they give is apt to be less truthful than polite. To every leading question they agree, regardless of its nature.

I never saw a Congo soothsayer at work. I never caught a witch doctor doing his stuff. I know just what they do because the boys would come and tell me all about the antics they performed. They would put on plays to show how it was done. But I could never get them to tell me when the seances were going to be held.

There is no doubt about the power these fellows hold. They are just about to lose it, but they have not lost it yet, and in the past they had things pretty much the way they wanted them. They used to point a finger at a man and tell him he was going to die, and die he did. And more than that, they often named the day and hour. Such instances are well substantiated.

It must be they are partially sincere, and I would hate to say that all they do is evil, but all their potency is based on fear, suspicion, and distrust. It is hard to credit them with any decency of motive when all they do is stir up trouble and make the people more afraid. The Congolese need nothing to increase their fears. They are sick with fright already. They laugh and sing and dance, and may appear to be carefree, but underneath they have the jitters. They are happy go lucky but deep within their consciousness is the sense of impending doom. Ten thousand awful, stifling, overmastering fears weigh down their souls.

If a man in this country were living on a street of seven houses, and one night one of his neighbours' houses was broken into and the neighbour, when he remonstrated with

the raiders, was killed and his family as well; and on the second night the same thing happened in a second house; and then in another and another; and on the seventh night this man heard a noise as of someone coming into his house downstairs, how would he feel? In some such way the Congo natives feel continually. The thing is going to get them. That they know. The only question is, "When will it come?" What thing? They do not know. If it were something they could see, they would fight it. They lack no courage when the enemy appears. But spirits have no form, and so they are seized with trembling on the path. I have seen them shake, and seen the beads of clammy perspiration break out on their faces and their hands. Taboo hangs over them like some huge guillotine, inexorable, absolute, inescapable.

2

Ngomo's *nteke* was a big affair that lasted three full days, with several days before and after being taken up with comings and goings and preparations and afternaths. It was the habit of big chiefs around the region to put on celebrations now and then to honour some event or person, or just to show and emphasize their own importance, and they all vied with one another in seeing who could hold the biggest, most exciting spectacle.

Ngomo really went to town with this one. He had not eaten any fish for a period of more than a year, because it had been made taboo following the death of one of his wives. So when the duration of the time was up he held this festival, partly in honour of the wife and partly to draw attention to his long renunciation. And then he had not had one for a good long while and probably felt it was needed to bolster his prestige.

For days the paths were crowded with the visitors arriving for the show. The hospital was directly on one of the main paths and I admit that I did very little work that

week. I was too busy staring at the throng of native notables who came to celebrate, attended by their retinues of warriors, wives, and slaves. Attended by their children, too, who had the biggest time of all.

It was a parade worth watching. It might have been a thousand years before—something out of history or from a story book. The chiefs and elders had their full regalia on—skin belts and wide, voluminous breechclouts of grass cloth that hung down below the knees; necklaces of leopards' teeth and caps of monkey fur—and they were greased up to a fare-you well. Their bodies glistened with *ngola* (red wood powder and palm oil) and many were decorated on the face and arms and legs with streaks of white and blue clay. Their wicker shields were hung with skins, and all their knives and spears were brightly polished.

Behind them came the less important warriors and the younger men decked out in all the finery that they possessed. They, too, had glistening bodies and shining weapons. The Bakutu young men wore high-piled head-dresses in various designs, studded with brass tacks, or had heads encased in greasy, grass cloth caps.

Each group of new arrivals made about as much commotion as they could with drums and hunting horns and gongs and cowbell sort of fixtures on the handles of their spears. They danced and pantomimed and shouted as they went along.

The women, their bodies also oiled and smeared with clay in varied and strange designs, were burdened with huge baskets, piled high with foodstuffs, cooking pots, and water gourds. Their only clothing, if they were clothed at all, consisted of a G-string and a decorative bustle. The pudgy babies rode their mothers' hips or backs, supported by skin slings, or tiptoed at the ever ready breasts. The older children followed in a scattering group—confused and voluble.

It was something to behold. For anyone who had ever

sat down in an easy chair in a modern room it was a sight almost beyond belief. It simply could not be, and yet it was. And now that I am back in the easy chair again it seems unreal and fictitious.

"Was it not," I am inclined to ask myself, "some wild midsummer's dream?"

The Wema native village called Ecole was right against the mission's strip of land to the left as one faced the river, and Imomo was scarcely half a mile behind and to the right of us. Also about half a mile away, but to the front, was the Catholic village and the company posts. Beyond, two miles away, across Lonoli creek was another large Bakutu town.

Every house in every one of these communities, including our mission village, was crammed with visitors, and little temporary shelters sprang up everywhere. Every day the crowds went back and forth along the paths across the mission plot, and every night was loud with shouting and the beating of a hundred drums.

One night I could not sleep and went out and sat upon the steps of our front porch and leaned against a post. The utter strangeness of the circumstance impressed itself on me. I was in a situation more fantastic and bizarre than any I had ever thought was possible. I stayed there for an hour or so, half dozing, half awake. The buildings and the trees were ghostly in the whiteness of the moonlit night. The absolute incessancy of the drums beat upon my consciousness. Those drums would cause a turmoil in the most phlegmatic soul that ever breathed. I think one might become addicted to the drums as to a drug. There was within their odd, insistent tones the essence of emotional disquietude. I think that anyone who ever lived in Africa will have the drums as his last memory.

The first day of the official celebration was given over to the games, the wrestling, spear-throwing, and canoe racing. Wrestling in that part of the Congo differs greatly

from the art as we practise it here. They assume a sort of referee's hold to begin with, usually, and try to get a hold on their opponent's leg, upsetting him, or they attempt to twist him suddenly off-balance and get him to the ground. If any part beside the feet and hands is brought in contact with the ground, it constitutes a fall, and only one fall is allowed. Moreover, if two lads were fairly equally matched and neither achieved a fall within a few minutes, they were separated and matched with others. I suppose they thought it was useless to let two equals wear themselves out against each other.

We had at Wema an unassuming fellow named Ilo—a finely built young man and a good workman. I noticed him first when he was carrying my wife's *tepoi* on a trip soon after we came to Wema. There were eight carriers working in shifts of four, and what I noticed was that when the others shifted for relief he did not. Moreover, when they had shifted back again, he still stayed on. After they had shifted several times and he had never offered to give up his load, I asked him if he did not want to rest a while.

"No, I'm not tired," he said, and that was all. He just went on and carried all day long.

The ordinary Congo native has tremendous stamina, but Ilo was seemingly tireless. I kept my eye on him thereafter and found out that he had quite a reputation as a wrestler. Every now and then the boys would say that there had been a match and that Ilo had won. I could not understand why he was so successful since he was not oversized at all, so I was hoping I would have a chance to watch his style.

The lightweights wrestled first. Each village had a group of aspirants and two official seconds. The seconds of one village would choose a member of their group and lead him forth with much gesticulation into the arena, loudly proclaiming his prowess. Then someone from another village would accept the challenge and his seconds would

lead him out. There they were inspected by the judges as to equality in size and weight, and if the difference was not too great between them they were elected to wrestle. They then retired, one to either side of the ring of spectators, and after a lot of back slapping, body rubbing and arm-pumping, their seconds seized them in a firm grip, as if to prevent them from rushing forward and tearing their opponents to pieces, and led them forward like bulldogs in a pit fight. It took them from five to ten minutes to advance the five or six yards to the centre of the open space because of the continual horseplay, but when at last the seconds let them at each other, the affair was soon over—one of the contestants quickly overbalancing the other or a draw being declared.

I suppose that there is quite a lot of science in the way they do the thing, but it seemed to me to be a great deal of ado about nothing. This time, after they had worked up through the ranks of the lighter men, I had an opportunity to see Ilo. I watched him carefully and his technique was worth some close attention. In contrast to most of the others he was rather diffident and shared as little as he could in the preliminary byplay before the bout, but once the seconds had withdrawn there was no backwardness about the way he went to work on his opponent.

He assumed the usual Congo crouch—legs far back; trunk at right angle to hips; arms extended—and took his original hold as they always do, left hand around opponent's neck and right hand hanging free. But that was as far as he went with the classical manœuvres. Placing his right hand on the other's left shoulder, and lunging forward, he turned about-face and as he did so twisted his rival over on his back. The result of this sudden movement was that it brought the two of them back to back, Ilo upon his feet, the arms and legs of his foeman in the air. He made an end of it by tossing his opponent through the air for several feet.

It was one of the cleverest bits of wrestling I have ever seen. There is a similar jiu jitsu manoeuvre, except in it the shoulder and hip are seized. Man after man was brought to face him but the result was invariably the same. He was still undefeated when I left.

An hour or so later I was doing some typing on our porch when a procession of women came by wailing and crying and throwing dust upon themselves.

What happened? I asked a mission boy who came along. Did someone die?

No, he replied, their husband who was famous far and wide for never having been defeated in a wrestling match has just been thrown.

Ilo had thrown him.

On the second day they staged their ceremonial dances and their pantomimes—dances which commemorated special episodes in the history of their tribes and stories told in pantomime by professional tribal entertainers—and on the third day there was a huge sham battle with several hundred braves on either side. Their sham battles were not what one might think. I could not understand what they were all about. Most of it was over my head because I wasn't conversant with the tribal lore. A hundred or so warriors greased and decorated and accoutred to the nth degree would suddenly rush out upon the scene, their leader would recite some words I could not understand in old Lonkundo and then they would rush back and sit down. Sometimes two groups would stealthily approach one another, they would rattle their shields and spears a while, the leaders would recite some more and then they would both back up and take their seats. It was all very allegorical I supposed.

There were of course a lot of battles which resulted from the festival that there was nothing sham about and I came in for quite a lot of extra work. It looked for a while as if there might be a major war following the death of

one of the paddlers in a canoe race. It seems the two canoes were close together and they got to quarrelling back and forth. Finally two of the chaps dropped their paddles and went to work on each other with knives. The canoes both upset and one fellow was drowned. I think the main reason there was no further fighting over it was that his body was not found for several days.

Anyone interested in crews ought certainly to see the Congo River natives racing in dugout canoes. They have a most amazing aptitude for staying upright in their most unstable craft, even though they are leaping around in the water like game fish on a hook. And how they put themselves into it! They bend so far over it looks as if they might sip water with their lips at every stroke.

Each night, after the regular programme of the day, the younger people started up the dance. We walked through the village about ten o'clock one night and I counted twenty-six circles of dancers. They danced all night, paraded all the day, and danced again at night.

As a climax to the celebration Ngomo had a feast for some two hundred of the extra special chiefs and notables. As a token of respect and honour I contributed a hundred pounds of coarse trade salt. (I have the notion, too, that I contributed some goats but not intentionally. They disappeared about that time, and judging from the number that Ngomo served I think he must have got some of mine.) He had had the village out for days collecting quantities of meat, and from all reports he put on quite an extraordinary bill of fare.

The Nkundo peoples drink little alcohol, unlike the Bikonda, who go on frequent drunken orgies on their homemade sugar cane and palm nut wines, but for a feast a certain quantity of alcoholic spirits is deemed essential. I judged that Ngomo and his guests must have had no small amount of it, because I had a lot of burns to doctor afterwards.

The Congolese are always getting burned—especially the babies and the older men. They sleep close to their fire, and if they have a bed it is just about six inches high—just high enough to tip them off into the coals if they roll a bit too close to the edge of it. The most remarkable thing is that they do not get burned more often than they do. There are a good many epileptics in the Congo, and they, of course, suffer frequently, but commonest among the victims are the drinkers of the potent, open-air-fermented juices and the smokers of hemp. In our immediate neighbourhoods at Wema and Lotumbe there was not much addiction to either wine or hemp, but we did not have to go far from one place or the other to find communities where they went in pretty heavily for both.

The Congolese who drink rarely do it persistently. Only when a lot of them get together for some sort of society meeting or celebration do they make up a batch of their maggoty wine and all get drunk as a sort of ritual. Hemp smoking, on the other hand, is very definitely a lonely vice, although indulgence in it is a common thing. We saw some awful burns resulting from the palm wine sprints, but hashish addicts were apt to burn themselves to death. When they did survive they often presented a gruesome appearance. One of the members of the Lotumbe church had been a great hemp smoker in his day, but after several episodes with fire he swore off and became a Christian. His ears were both burnt off; what was left of lips and eyelids were so contracted that they might just as well have been entirely gone; and his face and scalp were one mass of scar tissue, not to mention the crippling contractures of his neck and limbs. I simply could not bear to look at him at all, and I am not oversensitive. An artist could have painted him as "the living death."

At any rate Ngomò must have had a goodish bit of native drink around for all his boon companions, judging by the evidence. And there was beer in bottles, too. Wherever

one may go one finds the white man's altruistic influence—his whisky and his beer His contribution to the gracious living of the black!

3

Among the people of the Congo, age holds the dominant prestige, and to be old is to be wise—at least by inference and expectation The older the Central African becomes, the more respect he is able to command Not because of any special wisdom of his utterance or any particular soundness of his judgment, but simply as an increment of increased years

To call a person young or to remark upon his youthfulness, among the Bantu, is to insult him It does not do to say to one of them, even in fun "Oh! You're just a boy" He would take it very much to heart and be decidedly offended

In the Lonkundo language the word *mpiso* may be translated as "authority" or "position" or "prestige," and it is my impression that the average Congo native is much more jealous of his place in society than men of any other section of the world that I know I think that the marked honouring of age among them has developed through the years as a natural outcome of this urgency for standing in community affairs, and it appears to act as an excellent tonic for the ego of the general adult, male public We men past middle life need bolstering of some sort for our self esteem, and the Congolese seem to have hit upon at least one happy solution of the problem

Among the Bankundo, when one is very old, he is called a *bokulaka*, which is the name applied as well to kings and chiefs of high degree In our region of the Congo even the most insignificant being might attain importance if he hung on long enough

Many evidences of this esteem for the old may be observed, and one of the most distinctive ways in which

they indicate their respect for the voice of age is in the custom that they have of greeting men who are older than themselves by asking them for their *nsako*

Nsako are proverbs and epigrams in the Lonkundo, Lomongo, and the similar dialects of the other nearby tribes, and from the large stock of them each man chooses one or more for his own particular use. Thus as old Bokungu comes along the path, he is met by a younger man who greets him in the respectful manner by asking him for his proverb, and in return the old man repeats his favourite saying or one that may be apropos of the immediate situation.

"*Engambe Bokungu*," hails the younger man. "*Losako* (Old man Bokungu, your proverb)'

"*Tocika mbuni*," replies Bokungu, giving his proverb. "*We ol'eko?* (We leave our marks—are you there?)'

"*O, nd'eko* (Yes I am here) says the other.

Wherever there is a meeting between two men of different ages in this section of the Congo, these proverbs are repeated, and thus the old men are given their due of honour and respect, and the wisdom of the past is preserved for the younger generation.

There are occasional instances where, because of the importance of a man, he may be honoured by being asked for his *losako* by others older than himself, but such times are rare. For example, a chief, a great hunter or warrior, or a distinguished visitor may be so greeted, but for the most part the rule of age is very strictly adhered to. As they have it in one of their own popular sayings

"*Botomolo ntaikyaka bokune losako* (An older brother never asks a younger one for his *losako*)"

White people are considered by the natives to be in an entirely different category from themselves in nearly every respect, and so they are the objects of special consideration with regard to *nsako*. In the beginning I was quite conscious of the honour being done me when I was greeted by all and sundry in this especial fashion, but after the newness

wore off a bit I began to realize that it was not without its drawbacks. It was all very pleasant to be accorded a place of honour and to be recognized as one who had great wisdom, but in reality it was a lot more trouble than it was worth to be greeted by a long line of natives, one after another, and to be obliged to repeat some pithy proverb for each one of them. It got tiresome very quickly. Moreover the best form demanded that a different *losako* be used for each man in a group, and to keep in mind and be able to recite on the spur of the moment a half a dozen or more ancient aphorisms in a foreign dialect is no small accomplishment.

The natives were always coming at me at the most unexpected moments, when my mind was wandering at a great distance, and wrenching me back to earth with a sudden " *Losako, Bondele*. (Your proverb, white man.)"

The small boys who lived on the mission station as boarding students used to have no end of fun at the expense of the white men of the station. They would line up along a path where one of us had to pass and would demand of him *nsako* by the dozen. If they could heckle him into signs of exasperation or anger they were enormously delighted.

About the only defence against such tactics was to adopt a *losako* of a single word, or such a long one that by the time a person was through reciting it he had passed by the whole group. A third method which was more or less effective, even if not very clever, consisted in muttering unintelligibly or simply grunting in response.

I always felt lucky if I happened to be with someone else who also rated being asked for his *losako*, or in a group of older men, for then the greeting was invariably: " *Nsako ikinyo?* (What are the proverbs of all of you?)" The answer, which was given by all the group in unison, was simply, " *iyó*." What the word *iyó* may mean I haven't the slightest idea, and I never was able to find anyone who

could give me a satisfactory explanation of it. It was the traditional answer and that was all that any of them seemed to know about it. At any rate, it was short and easy and for that reason I appreciated it greatly.

When I first arrived in the Congo, I learned several quite high sounding *nsako* which I repeated consistently when ever I was called on. I gave them with all the enthusiasm and intonation of a young apostle, but I soon learned more efficiency and less fervour and became addicted to the ancient, short, and simple *ikoke*—an abbreviated form of *kend'ikoke*, which may be translated softly 'or "care fully," or in the longer form 'go carefully," and for which a good English counterpart would be 'watch your step."

If I were being pressed with greetings, I merely repeated it over and over, but if I had more time I was apt to start off with my favourite of all the native sayings that I knew "*Bonto l onto eleng'elenge*," which is literally "Man and man, way, way," and which would be, in free but effective translation, 'Everybody to his own liking." I had quite a number of *nsako* in my repertoire before I left the Congo, but it was so easy to become habituated to the same ones and to use them over and over, more or less automatically, that I rarely shifted from a tried and true half dozen.

Among the natives there are many who have very long *nsako*—some of which may take anywhere from several minutes to half an hour to repeat—but in reply to a casual greeting they use only a sentence or two of the whole and the rest of it must be inferred by the listener. For instance, an old chief of my acquaintance had for his *losako*, "*aolela* (he is crying), and one day I asked him what the person referred to was crying about. Whereupon he obligingly repeated the whole of the story about a man who had had many wives and they had all deserted him, to his great sorrow and shame." Now for the natives it was only necessary for him to say "*aolela*," and they knew that he was referring to the complete tale with all its fine points and

inferences which were much too subtle for me to grasp even after I had heard the whole of it.

Now and then, if some older man who happens to be standing in a group wants to make or emphasize a particular point by using one of the old proverbs, he may turn to one of the younger men and say: "*Onjika losako*" (Ask me my proverb)." Then when he has been asked for it, he quotes the specific saying that applies to the thought to be brought out.

Women, it may be remarked, are almost never accorded the honour of being asked for *nsako* unless they have attained a very great age or have gained a wide reputation for special ability or wisdom. Even then, instances are rare. We at the hospital used to ask old Bolumbu for her *losako* frequently because she was so full of snappy comebacks and got so much fun out of the procedure, but it was never done in seriousness by any of the boys.

The influence of the Christian teaching can be widely remarked in the *nsako* of those who have been associated with the missions, and it is considered good form for the adherents of the church to give quotations or sentiments from the Bible instead of the native proverbs. Not infrequently some of them will develop original *nsako*, based on biblical principles but in their own language and of their own thought. It is a tribute to their insight and their appreciation of the fitness of things that I have never heard a native give a *losako* which was taken from the Bible that was not, to my way of thinking, definitely to the point and of some spiritual significance.

That this custom of greeting with *nsako* is an old one is indicated by the fact that the language used—especially in the verb forms—is quite different from that now spoken—an older version of the tribal tongue which is used only in those proverbs. It is a pity that it is impossible to follow these interesting sayings back to their origins in the past, but with the Central African, history stops with the memory

of the oldest man or has become an indefinite tradition, passed on from generation to generation in their folk tales

4

The evolution of a language is something to wonder at I have wondered at it, anyway, a lot of times Far back in our ancestral tree our ancient parents must have merely grunted their ideas, and from those grunts and squeals and roars have come our languages But it is odd that there have come to be so many different ones Did man come only from the Asiatic steppes? Or did some very ancient Bantu drop from a Congo tree, and then and there decide to walk upon his feet?

Somehow, through the years, the Bantu speech has come to be a soft, alliterative, very pleasing tongue The voices of a group of adolescent girls are like the babblings of a brook Their high pitched easy laughter is delightful to the ear Is it significant that only human animals can laugh?

I interrupted two young Congo women, once, across the Lomela from Wema I say I interrupted them I was walking through the forest and came upon them unawares They were damming up a little stream to make a minnow trap and they were so intent upon their job and chattering so constantly that they failed to hear me coming I stopped and got behind a bush and watched them for a while I was fascinated by their smooth, unceasing flow of speech The Congolese elide their words and often a whole half page of syllables will sound as if they were all hooked together in a half a dozen words (*bonto boko owa bobo* would be slithered into *bont'ok'ow'obe*) If the subject of a sentence has a certain sound, the rest of the words that are in it repeat that sound That is what I mean when I say their language is alliterative, although that may not be the scientific term For instance, *bator bane bale ba baninga bakam* (these are my friends ears) It is not always quite so cut and dried

as that, but as a usual thing the tonal quality will carry through

There is a rhythm and a cadence and an even and unbroken intonation to their talk that is pleasing to the senses. The frequent nasal *n* s and *'m*'s are never harsh or twangy, or perhaps I should say they are very rarely so. They conjugate their verbs sometimes by mere inflections of the voice. Philip used to try hard to teach me that, but I could never learn. He would say the same words over half a dozen times with slightly different pitch and stress upon the syllables, and tell me that in doing so he'd changed the tense each time.

Theirs is a language rich in verbs and poor in adjectives—two dozen would embrace the whole of the latter. Most amazing is that they had no words for any of the colours. Things were *jo* (dark, black) or *je* (light, white), and that was all. There were no reds or greens or browns or yellows, until they began to accept the terms for them in French.

The early missionaries had some trying times in writing out their first vocabularies. It took them quite a while to find out how the natives pointed at a thing. They would go along and indicate with their extended fingers a certain object and the natives would say "*bosai*," but when they'd point at something else the native would say "*bosai*" again. It finally appeared that *bosai* was the name for finger, and if an object was to be designated the lips were pursed in its direction instead of a finger being pointed. Once that was learned the missionaries had a lot less trouble finding out the names of things.

The pointing with the lips is, by the way, quite an effective way of indicating where things are, and was developed by primitive peoples, I suppose, so that they might have both hands free for shields and weapons. The African lips, thick though they be, are mobile and expressive. Moreover, they are never used for kissing. That is an art,

the Congo native never learned until the white man came. It is probable he never knew it could be done, and most of them do not know it yet.

The Congolese have still another language that they use. It is the language of the wooden drum. The drums they dance by and their war drums and their drums of ceremony—those are drums with heads of skin, stretched tight and beaten with the hand, but the *nkole* are the message-sending drums and they are made of wood. A log is hollowed out so that two lips are left on top, of two different thicknesses resulting in two distinct tones—one of them low and one somewhat more highly pitched. The low-pitched lip of the drum is called the male, and the higher one the female. Give almost any native man or boy a pair of softwood beating sticks and he will make the drum give voice.

Without attempting to be technical, it might be pertinent to say that the language of the Congo drum is not in any sense a code like Morse or International. It is more than a code. It is an attempt to imitate in sound and rhythm the effect of the human voice. I do not think I could ever beat the things or learn to understand their messages because I have not got the proper sense of tone and pitch, but I can see what they are getting at and catch on when they beat the simple calls. Take that one which they beat on Sunday mornings to call the people in to church: "*Alanga Nkolo—atona Nkolo* (He loves the Lord, he hates the Lord)." I had to be told what it was they were beating, and it took some special lessons on our back porch before I could actually hear with my own ears the words as they were "spoken" by the drum. But as I began to get the hang of how the thing was done the amazing cleverness of this African development came over me.

Imagine taking a short length of log, and with a crude, jungle-forged chisel chipping out enough of the inside of it through a narrow crack at the top, to make two vibrating surfaces of differing tones, and then being able to beat on

them with sticks so that the tones and rhythm of the thing produce actual speech. And just as one learns French or Greek or Russian or Chinese, one learns the language of the drum.

I wanted a bit of a special kind of wood, one time at Wema, and I was told that one of the natives in a village several miles away had some of it already cut. I rode out to see him about it, but found that he was in the forest hunting with the rest of the able-bodied men. I remarked to the old fellow to whom I was speaking that I hated to have made the trip for nothing, and he offered to call this man for me. He went to the village drum and beat a short message—repeating it every few minutes for, perhaps, a dozen times—then he turned to me:

"He'll be here presently," he said.

And, sure enough, he came along in ten or fifteen minutes.

"I heard my name being called on the drum," he said, "and came to see what was wanted."

One evening Efunza and Njoku Paul were sitting talking with Newell and me in our living room at Wema when suddenly both of them stopped talking and sat intent on something outside. Neither Newell nor I had heard a thing and we were at a loss to know what had attracted their attention. After a minute Efunza turned to us and said that the chief of a certain village some twenty miles downriver had just died.

"But how do you know?" I asked him.

"We have just now heard it on the drum," he replied.

"Listen," he continued after a pause, "and you can hear them repeating the message."

I listened hard but I could not catch a single sound that I thought sounded like a drum, and neither could my wife. But they could sit there and know that he had died and how the thing had happened. I suppose our ears have got out of tune and sluggish due to our manner of life. Those

mare. The other times the drivers came at night, the fleeing cockroaches were so noisy that they woke us up in time to get some boiling water to pour on the vanguard and protect ourselves.

I should hate to have to count the times, however, that they have got into our flock of goats. After spending several hours a night on several different nights in routing them with kerosene and fire, I built a sentry house and hired a sentry. Thereafter when I heard the characteristic stamping and bleating in the goat house, I called Enkesa and went back to sleep. I figured that my peace of mind was worth two cents a night.

But whether they are molesting you or not, the army ants are interesting insects indeed. They go rushing along in their one half to three-quarters of an inch wide lines like a vast and over-excited miniature army, and why they go and where they go and what brings them back to their nests, I do not know. The naturalists must find them an extremely intriguing subject of study.

If anyone draws a stick across their line of march or disturbs them in any way, several score of the bigger, fiercer ones, which seem to act as guards, rush out in all directions to attack the disturber, and they sink their nippers into anything with which they come in contact. These guards travel along with the rest of the column, but they appear to have a special function. They are about three-quarters of an inch long—about twice the size of the ordinary soldiers—and they have abnormally large heads, set with a pair of very vicious, needle-sharp pincers. Once they get these pincers set in a suitable spot, their heads come off before their hold is loosened. There must be many millions of these driver ants in a colony, for it often takes them the better part of a day to pass a given point, and judging by the frequency with which one comes upon them travelling through the forest, there must be plenty of colonies.

I think that every possible variety of ant must be repre-

sented in the Congo, from the tiny, red-brown ones that infest the house and arrive in swarms to carry away the crumbs as they fall from the table, to the enormous brownish-yellow wood ants that take a real hunk of meat out of a person if they get an opportunity.

I never ceased to be amazed at the ubiquity of those tiny ones. Everyone in the Congo keeps his table legs wrapped in rags which have been soaked in creosote or mercury bichloride, or else he lets them stand in butter tins half-filled with lysol or some other poisonous solution. The same precautions are taken with the cupboard where the food is kept, but even then they cannot be kept out. A straw blows across a tin and makes a bridge across the poison lake. And when it does, the tiny ants are always there to take advantage of the accident. They swarm along the straw and storm the tower, with "sugar" as their battle-cry.

I remember watching a line of them sneaking over on a spider web from wall to cupboard, and in the face of such tenacity of purpose I did not for a moment have the heart to wreck their tiny, breeze-blown avenue to riches. The floor of the screened-in back porch of our Lotumbe house could be as clean as Sam and mop could make it, but, if a crumb were dropped, only a few seconds were needed for the ants to get there in multitudes. In spite of every possible precaution one rarely got an ant-free spoonful of sugar.

You quickly learn not to reach out to support yourself by grasping brush or branches when you travel through the jungle. You learn to stoop extremely low beneath an overhanging limb, for if you brush it you are apt to get a handful of *mpona* down your neck and every one of them is like a little spot of fire. You never come and lie down on the shady lawn in Congo—not if you have done it once before. For every bush and every tree, and every leaf of every bush and every tree within the jungle, and every blade of jungle grass, is well supplied with ants, and every ant can sting or burn or bite. Some of them can practically devour you.

As for the fishworms, they grow very large and long. After a heavy rain they came out for a promenade upon the path. There used to be two dozen of them every rainy day between our porch and our front gate, and not one of them was less than eighteen inches long. If Mr Ripley will permit it, I shall say I measured one that was a full four feet and growing all the time.

The Congo is the land of the cockroach. It may not be that he originated there, but I am sure it is his habitat *par excellenc*e—his happy hunting ground. If it were not, there could not be so many of them everywhere, nor such exceptionally well developed ones. They are not the pale, anæmic sickly looking cockroaches that one sees in our apartment houses and hotels. They are big, fat, robust fellows of a rich, mahogany brown—fit for stratagems and spoils. They congregate in food cupboards and dish cupboards. They eat the paint off picture frames and furniture and the backs off books. They also eat the callouses off your feet, if you sleep soundly enough. They infest the kitchen and line its walls with their egg cases. They come out of hiding at dusk and sit along the walls, twitching their antennæ at the householder insultingly. They crawl into the sleeves of robes and pyjamas and go slithering over your bare skin with their disgustingly sticky feet when you put on these garments. They resist all attempts at eradication. They thrive on all sorts of insect powders, and a special brand gave our cockroaches such a lot of pep and vigour that they almost drove us out of house and home.

The Congo jungle is full of animals and the Congo rivers are full of fish, but the forest is so very dense and the swamps are so numerous that it is difficult to see them. The beasts have a distinct advantage over the hunters in a place like that, especially since the natives are forbidden by the government to carry modern guns and must obtain their meat in the ancient manner and by age old means. As for the fish, it is my impression that they stand about an

even chance against the primitive methods of the fishermen.

The monkeys were the most in evidence. There are a score of different species of the common ones, and I don't know how many more uncommon kinds. The natives shoot them in the trees with poisoned *bekelenge* arrows—a thin, split piece of reed, sharpened at one end and feathered with a single slipped-in feather at the other called *besongo*. These arrows never travel very true, and the natives might shoot a hundred times and never make a hit. I watched them one time trying for a monkey sitting in a tree—a big *ugla* monkey, black, with long white whiskers and a white-tipped tail. He sat up on his high, protruding limb and let the arrows whistle past him with apparent nonchalance. At last one came a bit too close, and with a hoarse and angry grunt he leaped away into the farther branches.

The paddlers were for ever wanting to stop the canoe on a trip and loose a few *besongo* at the monkeys which perched in the trees close to the water. That was a favourite place for them, apparently, or perhaps it was only that they were more easily seen there and it was only my impression that the Lomela was more thickly populated with them than the other rivers.

It was quite a sight to watch a troupe of these original trapeze performers go swinging through the forest in the tops of the trees. They travelled in a line—in single file. It was a looping sort of line that at certain moments reminded me of a half-burnt string of popcorn on a Christmas tree. Monkeys fascinated me. I could not help but wonder at the progress we have made—how much and how little—from their state, and more than once I have caught myself upon the verge of calling after them:

“Wait, Grandpa, wait for me.”

I do not know the difference between an antelope and a deer, but I believe I am right when I say that there are numerous varieties of antelope in the forests where we

were. They range in size from *mboloko* to *mbuji*. The *mboloko* is a tiny thing, and when full grown is scarcely bigger than a jack rabbit. According to the natives it is very fast, and it shares honours with the terrapin and leopard as the subject of many of the Congo folk tales, although *ulu*, the terrapin, is far and away the favourite. The *mbuji*, on the other hand, is quite a beast, which weighs between 250 and 400 pounds. But though they are big and brownish, they are very hard to see. I was hunting buffalo one day near Nkile and had had no luck, because we had tracked them all around and never got a sight of one. Njoku Paul, the evangelist and a hunter of considerable parts, was with me, and we were heading back to the village when suddenly he stopped and motioned me to come to where he was. We were following a path that led between the village and a distant spring, and I came up and stood beside my guide. Silently he pointed into the thick undergrowth, and I looked intently but could see nothing. He shifted closer to me and pointed again, and again I stared into the brush and saw nothing. I could tell by the expression on Njoku's face that he was completely disgusted, but I could not help it. I just could not see what I could not see. Finally I handed him the gun and motioned to him to shoot, but before he could raise it to fire an *mbuji* jumped right out from under me. I could have almost hit it with my hand. Njoku blazed away at it, but it was gone. We walked on to the village without a word. I knew that he was thinking of the meat we had lost because of my stupidity.

There are no lions in this jungle, although they figure in the tales the natives tell, as does the gorilla. The gorilla's little brother, though, the chimpanzee, is found frequently. One was once discovered in the village of Mbala. I suppose that he had seen or smelled some food he liked, and was too young to be afraid. The town was practically deserted, so the chimp was not disturbed, but as he came out

of a hut some old woman saw him and let out a yell. That scared the visitor and he departed rapidly, but the villagers burned the house they saw him in. They thought it was some spirit in the form of a chimpanzee.

The jungle is full of porcupines and ant-eaters and bobcats and wild pigs and owls and guinea fowl and crocodiles and hippopotami. There are, as well, a host of other furred and feathered forest folk too numerous to talk about, and that leaves out the snakes.

Wild pigs are very plentiful and they are frequently the victims of the hunters' wives, perhaps because they are so numerous, perhaps because they are just a trifle dumb. There is nothing cuter, though, in all the catalogue of infant beasts than wild pig babies. The wild pigs are fierce and dumb, and judging by the number of natives that were brought to us entirely *hors de combat*, as a result of encounters with these animals, they must have been at least as fierce as they are dumb. Paul Boko, who was my official hunter for several years at Wema, barely saved his skin a couple of times by giving a wounded pig my gun to chew on while he climbed a tree.

All day, when the rivers are low, the crocodiles lie thick in the sun on the sand banks, late in the afternoon the *nkulohoko*, a type of pheasant with beautiful blue plumage, fills the air with his peculiar, haunting *ko ko ko ko ko kolu*, in the shallow marsh at the bend of the Momboyo River, the hippopotami disport themselves in the moon light with Gargantuan puffings and blowings, all night the hoot-owls call and silent bats go darting after bugs.

Of all the sounds I have ever heard I think the most destructive to the nerves is that produced by horse faced bats. There is a parasitic tree that wraps itself around the palms and bears a fibrous sort of fruit. There were a lot of them along the river front, close to our houses, at Lotumbe, and when the fruit got ripe the horse faced bats would congregate and give their awful, raucous, nerve disintegrating,

nightly serenade—'plutt! plutt! plutt! plutt! plutt!' and then a 'kr kr kr rrrrrraaaaw,' diminuendo. Then repeat.

It looked as if they would drive us out of the Congo, once, because they gave young Bill the terrors in the night. He was not quite four, and when the bats woke him up with their ungodly noise, he was halfscared to death. I only cured him by catching one of them and letting him get used to it while it was blinded by the light. After he realized what diminutive creatures they really were, in spite of the prodigious noise they made, he never was afraid of them again.

There are no skunks in the Congo, but they have a Congo counterpart—the *bowane*. The *bowane* is a little brown striped sort of cat about as tall but somewhat heavier than a skunk. The odour it dispenses is not quite as pungent or pervasive as the skunk's, but it is equally vile and it makes posts and walls smell for ever and for ever.

I suppose that there must have been great numbers of snakes in the jungle—indeed, I know that there were, for the natives were always catching some of them to eat, and being bitten by no end of other kinds—but in all the time I spent in travel through the forest, I never saw but two alive. That does not, of course, take into account the ordinary grass snakes and house snakes which abounded on the mission compound and merited very little attention unless you inadvertently put your hand on one. There was a long, thin, pale green snake that seemed to have a predilection for the missionaries' houses, but this was a very amiable and friendly species.

I have treated lots of snake bites for the Congolese, but never any fatal ones. I do not know just what to think of that. I have heard reports of many deaths resulting from snake bites, but none that later died ever came to me. I reckon there was a reason—if the snake was poisonous

enough to kill, the victim died at once and never got as far as where I was. At any rate, whenever a native was bitten he became convinced that he was going to die, and so I fixed the vilest-tasting medicine I could think of as a psychological antidote. By making them imbibe big draughts of it, and telling them that it had never failed to cure, I am satisfied I saved a goodly number from the grave.

One of my great regrets in the Congo was the fact that I saw so few pythons. In all the time I was there, I saw just two of them alive. I saw plenty of dead ones, for the natives frequently brought them in to sell for meat, but though I looked and looked when I was in the forest and on the river I saw only two of them *in vivo*. One was swimming in the river when I was on the *Oregon*. It was remarkable to see how fast the steamer workmen loosened a canoe from alongside, and how enthusiastically they went after that snake. They made the dugout almost skim the water until they were abreast of it, and then attacked it with their knives. The big constrictor hurled himself this way and that, lashing out with head and tail, but the black men had their mind on meat and were more than a match for the reptile. By some peculiar genius which they have they kept their canoe afloat and edged it in against their prey. They were not able at first to come close enough to put in telling blows, and one fellow in his excitement leaped into the water and got to grips with the tail. It was six to one and they soon won out, but judging from my view of the battle, I thought that they were lucky. I was anxious to see pythons, but I was very happy that I was not in that canoe.

The other live one in my experience came silently down from heaven. I was walking through the forest beyond the village of Bosa headed for Ntangenkoi. I was alone, my mind fixed upon the castles I was building in the air, and I looked up and there it was. In front of me and to the left there was an opening in the trees, backed by a clearing

where some native woman had her garden plot. The effect was very much as if someone had hung a giant picture frame, and in the centre of it, outlined with stereoscopic distinctness against the background of the sky, was the snake. It was no more than forty yards away from me and was in the act of lowering itself from a high protruding limb to another one some eight or nine feet below. Every movement was as smooth as oil or cold molasses. The action was the same as in slow motion pictures. The python extended its head straight out for some five feet and then with absolute deliberation swung the forepart of its body downward into vertical position. Its progress off the upper limb was almost imperceptible. I realized that more and more of it was hanging down but could not see any motion. At last it all but bridged the gap and hung suspended, motionless, magnificent.

'A painted serpent,' thought I to myself, "in a painted garden of Eden."

And then the head and forepart lay along the lower limb and as the tail came free above the python made a forward, undulating surge, and disappeared. When it had gone I took a breath.

Pythons, by the way, are of a shape that lends itself extremely well to cutting into steaks, which make most excellent meat. At least, my wife assured me that it makes good eating. The idea of eating snakes of any kind did not have much appeal to me, and I felt the same way about monkey meat, alligator meat, leopard meat, and a number of other unusual meats, but there are white people who do eat them and say they are good. *Chacun a son goût*. I once ate a piece of leopard meat, just to see what it tasted like, but I would just about as soon have had the leopard take a bite of me.

The African, however, is not in the least particular about what kind of meat he eats, and he consumes with relish everything in the catalogue. There is a liberal diet, from caterpillars to men. In our section they did not eat grass-

hoppers and rats, like their brethren of some distance down the Congo, but I am at a loss to understand why, for there are certainly plenty of them and they could not be worse than bats or new-hatched birds or caterpillars. Neither is the Congolese over nice about the state of preservation of his animal food. Meat is meat to him and is to be accepted as such wherever found, regardless of kind, consistency, or condition.

I was travelling with a group of natives in a canoe going to Mbala from Lotumbe, once, and we came upon a big dead fish floating in the river. They let out a shout of joy and headed for it. The canoe was not mine and I had bummed the ride, so I could not very well remonstrate with them about their find. I got into the bow of the dug-out and held my nose and my tongue. The fish was so rotten that they had to lift it out of the water with a mat to keep it from entirely disintegrating. They took it tenderly aboard and at the first beach we came to they warmed it up a little over a fire and ate it with gusto.

Because of climatic conditions meat spoils so rapidly that by the time it has reached the village from the forest it is frequently quite ripe. But nothing ever deters the native from satisfying his desire for it. The odour is never too overpowering; the maggots are never too thick, the state of decomposition is never too complete. Their cast-iron constitutions seem to be able to withstand even the most violent gastronomic insults without being too seriously affected.

2

No matter how much other food the native has, he is always hungry for meat, and there is a word in his Lunkundo language which means meat hunger (*jilo*) as distinguished from hunger in general (*nzala*). It is a word of frequent use and I have yet to see a Congolese who ever felt that he had had enough meat. If he were so full at the

moment that he could hold no more, he was sure to be lamenting the limitations of his stomach.

If there is some meat left over after they have reached repletion, it is preserved. I was about to say "carefully preserved," but that would not be very accurate, for while they are careful to see that all is preserved, their method of preserving it is not too good. They simply hang it up above an ordinary fire to be dried and smoked, and the climate is so warm and the meat is left in such large pieces that it undergoes a good bit of degeneration as well as preservation. It would be impossible for me to describe the smell of a Congo-jerked joint of wild-hog meat, but I will say that I made it a hard and-fast rule on all my trips that any man who was carrying dried meat must stay at the rear of the caravan.

In what would be for us the late summer season, the *bêto* hatch in Africa. They are caterpillars of a dozen different kinds, from small, white, fuzzy ones about an inch and a half in length to those which look like animated sausages. They constitute a delicacy as highly prized as anything in all the African diet. I should hate to be thought over-critical or unappreciative of the tastes of others who have different backgrounds than myself, and I do not want to be accused of being weak in the stomach or squeamish, but I think it is fair to remark that the sight of a big pot full of boiled caterpillars leaves me cold—painfully, shudderingly cold!

For quite a long time the traders and commercial companies have brought in a good deal of cheap, canned salmon, and more recently a lot of tinned corned beef. These products are very popular with the natives now, but for a long time the corned beef was refused because the most generally imported brand had the picture of a Negro on the tin. The manufacturers thought, I suppose, that since it was being sent to Africa the Negro on the label would be the natural thing, but the African thought differently. Even to

this day there are many of them who insist that the contents of the tin are human flesh, and they point out with perfect logic that if the can which has the picture of the fish outside is full of salmon, therefore the can which has the picture of a man on the label must have human meat within.

That does not mean, however, that all the people of the region baulk at eating human meat, for I was always hearing rumours of this or that man having disappeared, and during my first years in the Congo, among the fiercer and more primitive Bakutu and Basakentula tribes, I knew, personally, of a number of cases where men had been eaten. I doubt that cannibalism, in the sense of killing and eating men for food, has existed for a good many years, but the ritual partaking of the heart and liver of an enemy is still carried on.

Manga came to me one day at Wema to tell me that his relatives were calling him to come to Befili at once, and when I asked him what the trouble was, he said, in a matter-of-fact way, that his father had been killed and his vital organs eaten in open ceremony by his enemies. It was up to Manga, as the oldest male descendant of the murdered man, to avenge his death.

In so far as I understand it, there are two reasons for this type of cannibalism. First because it is felt, as in the case of the leopard, that to eat the vital parts of a man or animal gives the eater some of the strength and courage of the eaten; and secondly, to eat those organs of an enemy as a sort of rite is to humiliate him as well as all his relatives to the utmost. It is the consummate insult.

It is possible, of course, that hunger and an acquired taste may even now result in someone being eaten in entirety. I once gave a Lotumbe schoolboy permission to go home, and asked him how he planned to go. He told me, and I asked him if another route would not be shorter.

"Yes," he said, "but too many people who have gone that way were never heard of any more."

It may be interesting to note, in speaking of the vital organs of a man that for the Congolese the liver seems to hold the foremost place. He does not say take heart when he wants someone to be patient or courageous. What he says is "*Ika mpiko* (Press down on your liver). The Congo heart is never broken, but the *botema* (the general digestive apparatus) is. The native's heart may never over flow but his *botema bosulama* (stomach swells up). Who shall say the heart is more important than the liver?

3

The Congo is the land of the leopard the prowler of the night the ancient enemy of man most feared and hated of the animals. When darkness comes he raids the villages and carries off the chickens and the goats and dogs and now and then a child. In the softened clay of the village path after a run one may nearly always find the tracks of one of these big spotted cats. And on the path in front of our own houses too. The long veranda of the house we lived in at Lotumbe had three flights of steps—one at either end and one in the middle. One morning I got up to find that in the night a leopard had come up the middle steps walked back and forth once or twice, and gone down at one end. I had Nkolobise wash the porch, and to this day I am glad I did not wake up just about that time.

Mrs. Clark was paying us a visit at Lotumbe several years ago and brought her monkey, Midas with her. We fixed a house for him on the top of a post, right at the corner of our back porch and chained him there at night. About three mornings later there were leopard tracks beneath the post and Midas was gone.

The leopard is the symbol of fierceness and strength in all the native folk tales and its flesh although it is taboo for women is greatly prized by the men as they consider that it imparts to them some of the potency the beast had in life.

When a leopard is killed, it is an occasion of considerable rejoicing; it is skinned and cut up by a certain member of the tribes whose ceremonial office is an inherited one; and the teeth are reserved for the chiefs and men of rank, who wear them as signs of their authority. Many are the tales told around the evening fires of these savage animals and of encounters with them.

Not far from Lotumbe, in the village of Boyeka, there was a man who told this tale about his fight with a leopard: A group of men from his town were in the forest on a hunt, one day, and they came upon a leopard feeding on an antelope that it had killed. When they saw it, all the men except himself beat a hasty retreat. He stood his ground and shot an arrow into the beast's side. Once he had loosed the arrow he dropped his bow and ran for a tree. As he started up he realized the wounded animal was after him, and he climbed for his life. Higher and higher he went in the tree, but he was losing the race, and as the furious cat was just about to reach him he turned in desperation and grappled with it hand to claw. He was able to get hold of both its forelegs—one in either hand—and they fell together out of the branches. Luckily the man landed partially on top of his foe, and before the beast could recover he threw his legs around its body, holding it tightly to him in a scissors grip and thus preventing it from using its hind claws effectively.

Lying there, hugging the hindquarters of his enemy to him and holding its front feet at arms' length with the strength of utter despair, he yelled for help. Now, in the Congo, blood is not only thicker than water but water has no substance at all, so that at first none of this man's party would come to his aid—none of them being relatives of his. Finally, however, after what seemed to him hours, one of them ventured back and made an end to the struggle with a spear. Thereupon, they made two litters out of branches and returned to the village with the leopard stretched on

one of them and the man on the other. In attestation to the truth of this story he shows, all over his face and arms and upper body, the scars of the battle.

4

There is something intriguing about elephants—something that captures the imagination—and I doubt that anyone could stay any length of time in Africa without having a touch of elephant-hunting fever.

I had brought with me from America a .30 calibre sporting rifle and a couple of boxes of shells, just to be prepared for eventualities. I reckon that was the reason, for as a matter of fact I do not believe I had ever put any thought into the matter. It was simply a case of going to Africa and a gun coming sort of naturally to hand. The British Government tried to get it away from me during my few months' sojourn in London, but I finally got to the jungle with it. I soon found that I did not have a great deal of time for hunting, and that it was a lot more work than fun to go creeping and crawling through the thorny, ant-laden underbrush and getting continually half mired-down in the swamps. But the government had extended me a permit to kill two elephants in order to supply my hospital patients with meat, and it seemed a shame to waste it. So when Paul Boko came in with the report that there was a big herd nearby, I succumbed to the desire to have a go at them. Fred Rowe, a fellow missionary, and I decided to see what we could do about getting some hospital meat.

The news of the presence of the herd had come late one afternoon—this was at Wema about a year after our arrival in the Congo—and we started after them early the following morning. Fred had a .405 lever action rifle, I had my gun, and there were with us about a half a dozen natives for trackers, armed with spears and shotgun.

I take it that there are several types of hunters. There

are the professional big-game hunters, who make a business of standing nonchalantly in the paths of all sorts of charging beasts and dropping them with single, well-placed shots to their brains so that the dead animals come to rest just touching the killer's toe. There are the amateur trophy hunters, who assemble a retinue of a few hundred blacks, with guides, carriers, cook boys, tent boys, water boys, gun bearers, camp followers, and whatnot; they go on a high powered safari, kill the government limit of this and that, and fill their houses with mementoes of their intrepidity. Then there is the common garden variety of hunter, like Fred Rowe and myself, who is not always sure whether he is coming or going and whose shooting is nothing to write up in the papers.

Now, strange as it may seem, neither Fred's wife nor my own was at all enthusiastic about our going out to shoot elephants. Both of them, however, were on hand to see us off. Just as we were leaving, my wife said to me that if I must go elephant hunting she wanted me to bring back a baby one for her to play with.

It was still dark and the mist was thick on the river as we took our canoe and paddled up to the fishing village near where the herd had been seen the night before. We waited there for the vapour to clear from the marshes—sitting round a fire in one of the temporary shacks of thatched leaves that the natives build in these river camps.

It was not long before our trackers declared that there was light enough, and we set out. We went wading along for an hour or so, sometimes knee deep and sometimes hip-deep in the elephant churned mud of the swamp. Every now and then we would catch a glimpse of weaving, indefinite forms ahead of us, but we had no opportunity to shoot. Then, all at once, we came upon them. They were standing, closely grouped, at the far side of an open space near the river. There must have been fifty or sixty of them. It was a sight never to be forgotten. We stood there for a

long time, staring at them, unable to move. We might never have moved if it had not been for the natives. They were realists. Action was what they wanted, and meat, and they let us know it. If we had not begun shooting, I think that they would have exploded themselves.

I should like to say that I took careful aim at a large bull and dropped him with one perfect shot to heart or brain, but the fact of the matter is that I was not even wholly conscious of what went on in the next few seconds. I remember the thrill that the sight of those magnificent, big beasts gave to me. I knew that there they were—a great, grey, swaying mass of them, merging into the green background of the forest. I remember the sense of utter unreality that I felt, as if I had suddenly been transported into a different world, and a different age. I knew, subconsciously, that I was shooting as fast as I could work the bolt on my gun, but I must have snapped the firing pin on an empty chamber half a dozen times before I actually realized where I was and what was happening.

One elephant was down and another, apparently, was pretty badly hit. We went plunging after it, trying to reload our guns as we went. We caught up with him shortly and finished him off with a round or two more apiece. By that time the herd had disappeared and we turned back to take stock of our kill—a big cow and a fairly large bull. We regretted having killed the cow, but distinguishing the sex of an elephant in the middle of the African jungle at a distance of forty or fifty yards would not be easy for the calmest judgment, which ours was not.

The natives were beside themselves with elation. They proceeded to do a dance on each of the carcasses, first on one and then on the other. While they were engaged in celebrating, we began to be aware of a most prodigious bellowing in the woods not very far away. The natives declared, without hesitation, that it must be a wounded elephant and a very big one. We followed the noise, hoping

to get a look at the animal that was trumpeting so furiously, but it was on a bit of land cut off from us by a bayou. Moreover, since I had shot away all the shells I had with me and Fred had only two left for his gun, we were afraid to make a frontal attack without knowing more about what we had to face.

We dispatched a runner to Wema to bring some more ammunition, and had another man climb a tree to see if he could make out what was creating such a tremendous disturbance. Then we settled down to wait for more shells. The man who had climbed the tree came down and reported that he had seen the elephant and it was a huge bull.

We sat for some time, listening to the almost continual roaring that was coming from the little island. After a bit I got tired of just sitting and said to Fred that I was going to have a look at whatever was there, shells or no shells. He agreed that it was a good idea, and while there was considerable protest from our black associates, they all came along.

We waded, shoulder deep, through the bayou, negotiated a small thicket of underbrush, and then came, all of a sudden, face to face with the elephant. He had scented us and was looking toward us with his trunk extended and his ears widespread—a thoroughly mad animal. He was mad, all right, and ready to fight, but we almost fell over with astonishment when we found ourselves confronting not a huge tusker but a tiny baby elephant, just table high and with no tusks at all. When he saw us, however, the baby charged as fiercely as if he had been a giant and the speed with which the natives got up trees was remarkable to behold. He had barely got well started before they were all entirely out of reach. Fred and I, being farther descended from the monkeys and less agile than our black friends, decided upon running instead of climbing, and we cut into the bush out of his line of charge, circled round and came up back of him. He looked a lot smaller from the

rear and so I slipped up behind him, grabbed his tail, and tied it around a sapling. I hung on and yelled for help. While the beast and I played tug-of-war with his tail, the natives came down out of the trees, cut vines, and hog-tied him.

In the meantime, the runner whom we had sent back to Wema for shells had spread the news that we had killed two elephants. In an amazingly short time all the people of the region—men, women and children—arrived on the spot. Every one of them had a knife and a basket. It was with the greatest difficulty that we were able to prevent the whole mob from rushing in and hacking the animals to pieces with madness and no method. We selected about a dozen men to do the butchering, and a dozen more to help us keep the crowd at bay, but in no time at all the butchers had increased to three or four dozen, and the guards were far too interested in the carving to keep watch on the others.

The result was one of the wildest scenes I have ever looked at—a thousand or so meat-crazed Congolese, crowded into a tiny, hundred-foot, open space in the jungle, yelling and gesticulating and surging ever closer and closer in upon the area we had tried to reserve; forty or fifty over-stimulated black men on an elephant carcass, cutting, hacking, and tearing at it like maniacs, deliberately smearing their bodies with blood. They were supposed to be putting the meat in a pile, to be dried for hospital use, but only a very small portion ever got there. There were too many yawning baskets. Soon nothing was left except the skulls.

Among the late arrivals on the scene were Fred's wife and mine. I was able to take Newell down to our canoe and show her, tied up in the bottom of it and making a terrific racket, the little baby elephant she had asked me for.

The tangible result of our hunt was that we had on hand about one quarter of the meat of two elephants and one

live, baby one, just thirty inches high. We soon discovered that the rearing of this small pachyderm presented endless difficulties. We made a room for him in one end of our chicken house, but he did not like to be shut up. Like a lot of other children, he did not want to go to bed at night. When he was finally coerced into his bedroom, by dint of much shoving and hauling and smacking about the ears, he filled the air with the most extraordinarily loud and continuous laments. It was amazing how much noise such a small beast could produce.

The food problem was not easy. He had no teeth and was not able to eat grass or other green stuff. I made rice and cassava gruels, which I fed him through a rubber tube, and though he was hungry enough to drink them, it was quite apparent that he did not like them. Twice we gave him feeds of milk, and it did our hearts good to watch him guzzle it down. But his capacity was much too great and our finances much too meagre to feed him tinned milk, except as an occasional special treat, even if we had been able to get it.

We named him Jim. He soon accepted his place as a member of the family. He followed me around very much like an overgrown puppy and quickly learned to know his name and come when I called. He seemed perfectly content as long as someone was close to him, but if he were left alone for any length of time he would begin to cry for attention—and his crying was really crying.

It was amusing to watch the reaction of the natives to him. I would take him for a walk along the paths and everyone we met would run away in real or pretended alarm and from a safe distance would clap their hands to their mouths in their characteristic gesture of surprise, and cry: "*Mo! mo! Bendele bafa banto.* (White men aren't really people.)"

For some weeks he seemed to do quite well and was as frisky as could be, especially if he had a tub of water in

which to play, but later he began to develop trouble with his digestive tract, refused to eat, and went rapidly down hill. We had become very much attached to him and could not bear to see him suffer. I had to have him shot. It was not without some tears that we saw the end of little Jim.

He attracted great crowds of visitors. During the first few days there must have been four or five hundred natives a day, from far and near, who came to see a live elephant in captivity, even though it was only a small one. For while the Congo forest is full of roaming herds, the people give them as wide a berth as possible except when on a hunt. That is an attitude which is not without wisdom, for the elephant, although he is a fairly amiable beast if let alone, frequently becomes upset over trifles and, being of such a size, his little tempers are apt to be dangerous.

One old man was brought into the hospital at Lotumbe who had been pretty badly done up by one of them in an inadvertent meeting. He had gone out to inspect some of his animal snares, had found some elephants on the path in front of him, and had attempted to scare them out of the way by shouting and waving his arms. Instead of being scared and moving away one of the cows moved in his direction, pitch forked him a time or two with her tusks, and tossed him into the swamp. His sons came along about that time and, according to their story, they called out to the elephants and shamed them for picking on such an old man. Whereupon the beasts departed into the forest. The old gentleman had some half a dozen extensive holes in him, but the tusks had missed the vital spots and he recovered.

A somewhat similar experience was had by one of the native preachers of our mission, who lived upriver from Lotumbe. Some years ago, he and his brother in law were starting through the forest to visit the next village, and had not much more than got out of sight of their own town when they came very suddenly on an elephant cow and her young one. The preacher was ahead and, in attempting to

sunstroke as a result of walking fifty yards through the afternoon sun

Another story was of a young man who was about to disembark from the steamer at Matadi. As the ship was tying up at the dock this man inadvertently stuck his head out over the rail into the sunshine to wave to some friends who had come down to greet him. As a result of this momentary indiscretion he fell over the rail into the water dead! Diagnosis sunstroke actinic rays or what have you

I cannot take oath that things like this did not happen in the good old days but I am very happy to say that of late years the curse has so far been taken off the sun and its rays that woollen socks and underwear flannel spine pads and belly binders green lined parasols are things of the past and the sun helmet is fast losing ground. I very rarely wore any underwear at all and it has been several years since I have so much as owned a helmet

The children benefited most from the change in ideas about the sun for when they were compelled to go about all day in woollens and helmets they led a rather pale existence. But now that they are permitted to play out of doors all day without any more restrictions than are imposed on children at home under similar circumstances they have a happy time

The Congo is the land of mould and rust. Books moulded in their cases food moulded in the food cupboard and shoes in the shoe cupboard the silk and wool clothes that we put away so carefully in air tight steel trunks to be worn on furlough were ruined by a particularly tenacious form of mildew. The lenses of cameras binoculars microscopes and other kinds of fine glass such as lamp chimneys microscopic slides and the better qualities of window glass were attacked by a fungus which etched the surface making it opaque. We once ordered a box of glass for some windows and when the panes arrived they were all grown firmly together in a solid block.

Rust developed on everything that was susceptible to it, and on a lot of things that ought not to have been. Stainless steel stained, indelible ink faded, and glue refused to stick. One of the minor tragedies of Congo life was that veneered furniture almost invariably came unstuck and resulted in some extremely sick looking pieces.

It was always summer in the Congo on the equator. Whenever the sun rose it was six o'clock, and when it went down it was six again. We longed for a change of season. How welcome would have been a late September day with falling leaves or a Christmas day with snow! There are in general, two dry seasons and two wet ones which loosely divide the year, but these vary in time considerably from year to year and, except for a bit more rain at one time and a bit less at the other, there is nothing to mark the difference between them. Even in the driest of seasons there is rarely a week without rain.

CHAPTER XV

THE CONGO DAY

A GOOD deal might be said about life in the Congo—pro and con. But from my point of view most of it was pro. Perhaps I had better say the more important aspects of the life were pleasant. The houses in which we lived—tin at Wema and rambling brick at Lotumbe—were rather more barn like than luxurious, and our furniture was mainly Congo made, but those homes were comfortable and airy and we could not have been happier in a palace.

Our little house at Wema was mighty pleasant. It was a tin house with a roof of native thatch, set up on high posts to keep the termites from eating it entirely, and located on the summit of the long, low hill that sloped away to the river a mile away—a house made of sheets of corrugated iron roofing nailed to a rough lumber frame and floored with unfinished, hand sawn boards. It rattled merrily in the afternoon, hilltop breezes, and creaked and shuddered under the violent impact of the sudden tropical storms. It was beautiful in the sunshine, for it had silver walls, and the roof was entirely covered, as was one side, with a purple flowering bougainvillaea, and all around it there were hibiscus and cape jasmine bushes and honeysuckle vines. From the front of the house we could look far out over the surrounding country to where the blue of the sky and the misty green of the jungle met on the hills beyond the Tshuappa. We often ate our midday lunch on the porch, where we could sit and let our gaze wander out over the distant reaches of the interminable tropical forest.

About a hundred yards on down the hill from our front

gate there stood a big *bokungu* tree At dusk and when the moon was bright its foliage stood out in silhouette against the sky—the perfect image of a man We named the man Sylvester and confided in him He understood so much and was so calm He seemed always to listen to us with a sympathetic ear

What we lacked in our Congo life in the way of modern conveniences—and of these there were practically none—we made up for by having a surplus of cheap labour Our corps of servants included a cook a washboy and house boy, some garden boys wood boys goat boys a chicken boy, a disposer of garbage, a general all round flunkie or two, and if we lacked we easily could have a hundred more by simply shouting All the hangers on around the mission were eager to work—not too persistently—if they could get a little Congo cash And little is the proper word for the prevailing wage was just about three cents for able bodied workmen for an eight hour day

Having such a retinue about was generally more of an annoyance than a help especially since each one of them kept hounding us about advances on his pay for months ahead But they were practically all of them schoolboys and they needed the trifling stipend badly, so we surrounded ourselves with vassals and serfs and wore our tempers thin at their irresponsibility I sympathized a lot with those black boys and their money problems There was such a tremendous discrepancy between what they got and what they wanted They felt that they must dress after the fashion of the white man in shirt and pants and shoes and coat and necktie—hat, socks, garters handkerchiefs, and of course, underwear Outside of a tendency to splay feet, most of them were beautifully proportioned, with heavy shoulders and narrow hips and they wore European clothes with quite an air

Bicycles assumed a vast importance in their minds They thought they had to have bicycles—they were imperative

necessities. I did not know a single Congo youth who would not have gladly sold his soul to have a *bisinglette*. It was absolutely necessary that they have a sewing machine, and they wanted chairs and tables and tablecloths and dishes and more pretentious houses and everything, in fact, they ever saw a white man have. Then, too, their wives just had to be "*jilange mongo* (fixed up with lots of fanciness) "

How can they acquire those things, when they make but five to fifteen cents a day? They can't, and yet they kick against the goad. They borrow and they gamble and they steal and try to get advances on their pay. A characteristic Congo custom, which seems to have come down from antiquity, is the *Ikalemba* in which from two to half a dozen of them pool their weekly wages and take turns at getting all of it. It sounds all right in theory, but all its practical results are bad. It is hard to blame them very much if, having their own ideas on honesty, they often go astray from the straight and narrow path.

If I were asked to choose a theme for a Congolese anthem, I should be compelled to say, "*Onka bombale*. (Give me a debt.)" That is their perpetual refrain.

"*Onka bombale! Onka bombale!! Onka bombale!!!*"

One of the things I missed most in the Congo was a bathtub. After I had ruined the horse trough—a British tin-smith's idea of what I ordered for a full-length tub—by trying to kill a rat with a hatchet, I had to bathe in segments. I never did get reconciled to it.

But if the bathing was bad, the lying in bed was most excellent. The major subjects of my Congo course of education were light literature and long siestas. The afternoon siesta, I am convinced, should be obligatory everywhere to keep the world's blood pressure in control.

Our chief form of amusement after supper was to go to bed and read. We had a small tropical piano and often played and sang awhile before we went to bed;

We did our modicum of letter-writing and preparation for classes and book-work in general; now and then we had an evening of games with other missionaries; but the essential night life, which crowned the day, was to retire to our big, airy bedroom and read. The night clubber, the theatre-goer, the bridge fiend, the movie fan, the poker player—all may find amusement in the things they do, but to me lying in bed with a book is best.

A never failing high spot in our Congo life was the arrival of the mail, for though the intervals were long and often it was much delayed, eventually it came and always brought a thrill with it. There were the letters to be read, and magazines. Now and then there would be packages to open—especially at Christmas time. One who has never lived in isolated parts of the world can never know the meaning of the coming of the mail.

2

Even in a place as strange and different as the Congo, the daily routine gets to be a deadly thing. There have been a lot of mornings when I thought I could not stand that dirty old dispensary any longer. I have been of the opinion, many times, that if I had to see another black man with a hernia I would go completely off my nut.

Day followed day. Beyond the river the sky showed pale above the jungle trees; the birds gave out an occasional tentative chirp, as if to tune up for their morning concert; on the water, an early fisherman inspected his traps and, as he paddled his canoe from trap to trap, he sang a weird, high-pitched, haphazard melody, an aimless improvisation beginning as a shout and ending as a wail. Each morning I heard the sound floating in on the fitful breeze, now strong, now faint. I wondered at the burden of his song. Was it of joy or sorrow—the African singing his song? Suddenly from the direction of the church there came the

hollow, booming tones of the big *lokole*—the jungle reveille. The sound was one that filled me with dismay, for all of its romantic quality. It meant that I must stir myself and be about. It seems a pity that, no matter where we go, the necessity for early rising still pursues us. There is no region remote enough to escape it.

Sleepily, I put on my clothes—not very many of them—and rode out on my bicycle to call the six o'clock roll; to tell the various work squads what to do—the masons, carpenters, sawyers, brickmakers, makers of native thatch, the unskilled labourers and boys, to urge them on, to threaten and complain, to say repeatedly, "If you don't do the things I've told you must be done, I'll have to cut your pay." From there to teach a class for medical assistants; to operate, day after day, from four to half a dozen cases; to burn out awful ulcers, pull out awful teeth, examine patients by the score, examine urines and sputa and stools, to smell the awful smell.

After several years of that without vacation, except to hurry through the woods and look at other native blacks and their diseases, you feel you'd like to get away from Africa for ever. But you have scarcely got on the boat and headed home before you feel the pull of it again—the pull of Africa. The jungle gets you. It is a strange disease. It is not like the lotus. It is neither sweet nor tempting, and it does not make a man forget his native land. There is much about it that is harsh and bitter, and it bites one's soul. Perhaps it is witchcraft; one is certainly bewitched by Africa.

In the morning, while I was away, Newell kept her eye upon our boys and did the household tasks she had to do. She taught a special class or two and made her preparation for the session of the afternoon. When the afternoon *lokole* beat, it was she who had to hurry out to supervise the school and teach more classes. I did my homework in the afternoons and watched the children. At Wema, Bill

was all alone. He had scarcely seen another white child until he started home. But at Lotumbe we had quite a gang. We had two, most of the time, Tom being born about a year after our arrival there, the Hobgoods had three, then a fourth about the time we left; and when the Smiths came they, too, had three.

I think that group of children really had a happy time I know I did, watching them. I helped them make a playground in our backyard with a house made of slabs, a jungle gym, swing, sand-box, slide and giant swing, the whole enclosed within a high hibiscus hedge. There was a tree house and a miniature railway, too, made out of wheels I picked up in an old dismantled lumber mill down-river. About a year before we left we also made a little swimming pool for them, some twelve by twenty feet. It made it very nice for them when there was rain enough to fill it frequently.

We often went swimming in Janga, a bayou across the river, when the water was not too high to leave the banks submerged, and when the sand banks formed in the dry season we played around on them a bit. I never went swimming in the river without wondering about the crocodiles, but while there were no end of them in evidence along the banks when the water was low, they did not seem to go in much for human meat. At the moment, I can think of only three natives in my experience who were bitten by them.

Picnicking is one of the major missionary sports in the Congo, and we have spent many a happy evening on the river going to and from our favourite picnic grounds. These were the seasonal sand bars to which we used to paddle after work, swim for a while, and eat our supper on the sand. For use when the river was high I cleared a space on a high bank about two miles above Lotumbe, and fixed a fireplace and a table there and planted grass. The ants soon ate the table, but the fireplace and grass remained to

make a very pleasant eating place. It was a satisfying experience, after such an outing, to float quietly down the current in the gathering twilight and watch the dark silhouettes of the tall Lotumbe palms against the richly coloured sky. It was as romantic in its way as any gondola ride on the canals of Venice, and far less expensive.

I made an outdoor fireplace, also, in our own backyard—we had a fenced-in yard to keep away the noisy, smelly, village goats. Within its semicircle of flowering shrubs—honeysuckle, bougainvillea, lantana, gardenia, hibiscus, and coral vine—and flanked by several outdoor chairs, it became quite popular as a place to eat.

Each year thereafter Newell and I put on a banquet for the graduating class of the Lotumbe school. We brought the back porch ping-pong table out and got two other tables from the church and piled them high with meat and fish, roast corn, cassava bread, *banganju* (native greens in oil), plantain cakes, and, as a special treat, canned salmon, sardines, and tinned corned beef. They were the young sophisticates of Congo life but they could still remember how their jungle fathers ate to absolute repletion when they had food, lest it be the last for many days. Moreover, when their limit had been reached they gathered up the rest in leaves and took it home. It was the native way.

There was not much in the way of native foods that I could ever bring myself to eat, much less get very fond of. Their staple diet was cassava (boiled, or boiled and beaten into heavy cakes) and *banganju*. To this they added meat and fish whenever they could get it, usually cooked in palm oil; plantains, cut when green and beaten into spongy cakes, or else allowed to ripen and beaten up with cassava flour and fried in palm oil; a little corn, a little rice, some types of forest fruits, and now and then a rotten egg. Included in the item "meat" are bats and freshly hatched *ndēkē* birds, and snakes and caterpillars. They used no salt for anything but meat, because until the white man

came it was extremely difficult to get. They used to burn a kind of salt grass, soak the ashes, and then evaporate the water. But they put pepper into almost everything except the plantain and cassava. And when I say they put it in, I mean it. A handful of the hottest kind of raw red peppers are often dumped into a single pot of food. I suppose the reason they live as long as they do is that they are pepper-pickled.

Anyone who has ever eaten tapioca knows how rubbery the stuff can be, and tapioca is made from cassava. The native women boil it and then beat it up in wooden mortars until it gets to be about the same consistency as unmelted furniture glue. This heavy, sour, mucilaginous mass is wrapped in leaves in various shapes and sizes and constitutes the Congo bread, Kwanga, the staff of Congo life. I think the only thing that could be more resistant to the juices of digestion would be boiled automobile tyre. That is perhaps why the Congo native likes it so. It sticks to his insides so long, he does not have to eat often.

But while their bread was terrible, in my opinion, their *banganju* was superlative. That is, it was if the pepper was left out. To make this characteristic Congo dish, palm nuts are pounded in a wooden mortar and the oil extracted with hot water. This mixture of oil and water (*bosaka*) is then mixed with finely pounded cassava leaves and the result is one of the most delectable concoctions I ever hope to savour. In nearly every missionary household there was always a big kettle of it made up ready to serve. Frequently it was mixed with native corn which made it even better. I shall miss my *banganju*.

3

I think the thing that most frayed the missionary nerves was his inability to have a little bit of privacy. "The world is too much with us, late and soon," might well have

been the Congo white man's watchword. One never could be sure, unless he double-locked his doors, that some native might not come stalking in to talk to him while he was in his bath. It was a common thing to look up from something one was doing and find that he had visitors when he least expected them. Our bedroom at Lotumbe faced upon the long front porch, and my bed was by one of the windows. Rarely a night passed without my suddenly realizing that there was someone staring in at me, or my being roused from sleep by some excited voice.

When we were eating there was almost always one or more calling to us from the door. If we were trying to read or write letters, we had to stop and answer fifty thousand questions. There was nowhere that one could go to be alone. I made a tennis court at Lotumbe and we used to have an occasional game after the heat of the day, but I am sure I never played a game without having to stop half a dozen times to talk to some importunate native.

Talk about importunity—the absolute and utter ultimate in importunity is a Congo native asking for a loan!

And when a native came to visit, he could not tear himself away. Just when I had the most upon my mind Botulu would come up the path, or old Bofekya, or Ngömò. I should have been glad to talk with them a little while, but when they came they stayed all afternoon, and would have stayed on through the night, I believe, if I had not walked out on them. It was always expedient to entertain them on the porch, because then one could go into the house and leave them after half a day, but if they got inside they might stay a week.

One thing I absolutely refused to do—and I am alive today because I did refuse—was to “cut palavers.” In other words, to settle native quarrels and squabbles. I would not even listen to them. Life was much too short. Never having had to work, the Congolese have spent their time in sex affairs and quarrels, and rather than think up

new quarrels they frequently make one last as long as possible. The African's idea of telling his side of a disagreement is to start with babyhood and give in detail every circumstance that ever happened to him until the beginning of the particular altercation, and then start on it.

"No," I said to them a dozen times a day, "don't tell me anything about it. *Mpa boteni w'akambo*. (I'm no cutter of palavers.)"

Expatriated people make a lot of holidays and try to follow out the customs of their native lands. So we called a duck a turkey on Thanksgiving Day, regardless of the fact that harvests were a thing unknown in the Congo, and flew flags and celebrated on the Fourth in honour of the signing of a document the Africans had never even heard about.

We always had a tree at Christmas time. We had no pine or fir, for evergreens do not exist in the Congo, but we would pick a tree that we thought might keep its leaves a day or so, and hang it full of tinsel on the night before. Early Christmas morning all the Christian natives marched the paths and sang the Christmas songs and made a special point of serenading every missionary's house.

I never thought that Christmas could be Christmas without the holly and the evergreens and cold weather and all the things that I grew up with, but last year, after having been away and coming back to Christmas as it used to be, I felt that there was something out of place. I could not make the feeling out, at first, but then I realized that what I wanted was the natives singing and the Congo air. It is a strange world.

4

In the middle of the night I used to come out and stand on our veranda at Lotumbe. There was a vista through the trees which ended in a group of three tall palms at the

river's bank. It was so lovely it made me catch my breath—so beautiful, serene, calm. That vista and the moon rising over the jungle beyond the Momboyol! I have sat so often on the front steps of our rambling Lotumbe house, with the scent of honeysuckle in the soft, cool air, and watched the moon as it moved smoothly up the sky—majestic, huge. Its light sent back a wivering reflection from the water and exposed the lace like foliage of the big *bokungu* tree upon the river's edge. It always caused a sharp constriction in my chest. So much magnificence was hard to bear.

I shall always remember Wema, too. Wema—a little clearing in the primeval forest. A tin house on a hilltop, gentle breezes rustling through the branches of the palms, black storm clouds swarming up a summer sky, the smell of cape jasmine and moonflowers and night blooming lilies, the ceaseless beating of the drums, the crying in the night!

I wish I could be in Wema once again, and walk along the paths at evening when the sky is tinted and the air cool. I would walk down through the village and watch the natives gathered about their glowing fires, laughing and chattering. I would be greeted by them and would answer in return.

"*Inonga, ol'eko?* (Inonga, are you there?)"

"O (Yes I'm here)"

"*Ol'eko boloci?* (Are you well?)"

"O (Yes, I'm well)"

And then

"*Oetam'o, Inonga* (Goodnight, Inonga)"

"*Inyo, loetam'o* (Goodnight, all of you)"

Goodnight Goodnight